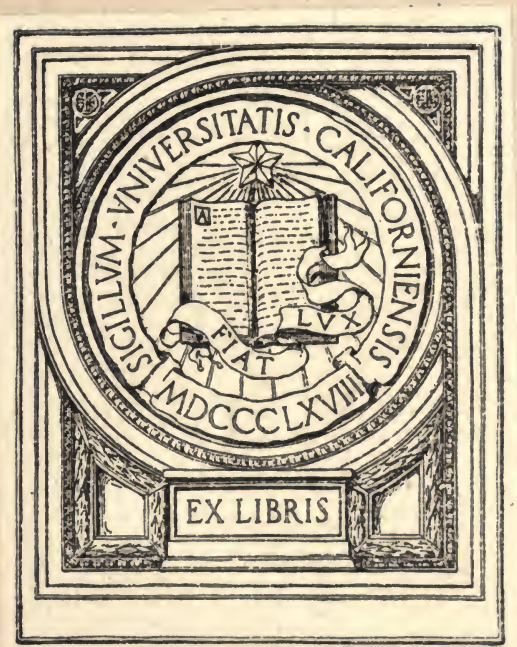
# WITH THE CONQUERED TURK

LIONEL JAMES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# WITH THE CONQUERED TURK

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The author at work in the field; watching the Battle of Lule Burgas
"It was a wonderful spectacle." *See page 128*

# WITH THE CONQUERED TURK

## *THE STORY OF A LATTER-DAY ADVENTURER*

BY

LIONEL JAMES

Author of "On the Heels of de Wet"

*ILLUSTRATED FROM DRAWINGS AND PHOTOGRAPHS WITH TWO MAPS*

BOSTON

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# WITH THE CONQUERED TURK

# FACETS

## I

THE six office slaves who imagined that they were living out of London, settled themselves into their first class carriage just as the bread-winners' train was moving out of Brighton station. Seduced by the Railway Company into the belief that it was worth a man's while to live an hour's journey away from the metropolis, the six had formed themselves into a railway-carriage club. Six days a week the guard reserved them a compartment. They had just caught the train both ways regularly with half a minute to spare. They usually completed one rubber of bridge each way.

The moment the train had started, the slip table was pulled out and the packs of cards appeared from the pocket of the Club's secretary for the week. The six men cut. The

two who had failed to make the *partie carrée* leaned back on the cushions and opened their morning papers. They were true to type, these six daily travellers. Five were business men. The sixth was an officer of the General Staff employed at the War Office. The latter was dummy in the first deal and he sought to improve the occasion by looking at his paper.

"By Jove!" he said, as he turned back the pages, "so this great battle at Tchataldja has begun."

The group of players took no notice of the ejaculation. The others, however, looked up quickly.

"The battle begun?" one said. "Why, there is nothing about it in these papers. You have got hold of another of these lying Austrian reports."

"Devil a bit," answered the soldier. "I only read this sheet and for a newspaper it sometimes verges on the accurate. By Jove, the Turks this time seem to be holding their own."

At this the card players showed some attention. "What," said one of them, "the Bulgarians have not walked over the lines?"

"Devil a bit," answered the soldier. "If this fellow is right, it would seem that the Bulgarians have taken the knock."

The two non-players having busily turned over the leaves of their papers and found no mention of the battle, asked the soldier for further details. This was given, to the effect that the Bulgarian force had made something in the nature of an attack against the Turkish lines at Tchataldja, and that, on the first day's showing, the Bulgarian attack had not been marked by any great success.

"It is a most curious thing," mused the elder of the non-players, "that my paper should have nothing about this affair. When did it take place?"

The soldier, catching the question, referred to the date at the top of the message he had been reading, and replied, "By Jove, this is quick work! They only started fighting yes-

terday morning. What I have been reading is what happened yesterday."

"I wonder how that has been managed?" said the elder of the non-playing business men. "I have taken this paper, man and boy, for twenty years, and I have never found it fail in giving the earliest and best information with regard to wars."

"Well, my people have beaten you," answered the soldier. "I have always taken this old rag, and although it may not always be the first with the news, it is generally pretty accurate. The man they have been employing all through this war seems to be the only correspondent who has shown any sense of proportion. He must, however, have been very active to have got this information back so quickly. What papers have you other fellows got?"

The card players when referred to just handed their papers over. These were searched without success for news of the battle. The paper which the soldier patronised

alone had the account. As the bridge players in turn became dummy they read the correspondent's account of the battle. All Europe had been waiting breathlessly for the Bulgarian offensive for nearly a fortnight. When it came to the soldier's turn to be dummy again, he settled himself down to a second perusal of the short battle telegram, and then delivered himself to such of his companions as were listening of the usual military tirade against war correspondents. The other five in the compartment had heard identical strictures, more or less daily, for the last six weeks. "These correspondents are the curse of modern armies," said the soldier, plagiarising the great field marshal with some vehemence. "You see the trail of the serpent here in this message. This correspondent says there have been these particular forts at Tchataldja where there were guns of large calibre and that they were of the old pattern. This is giving information to the enemy."

The elder of the business men looked up at

the soldier languidly. "But you also read out before that this correspondent stated that these old guns were firing black powder. Surely, if that is so, the Bulgarians could have seen for themselves the type of the guns in the fortress. Personally, I don't think that you are quite consistent in the way you revile daily these wretched correspondents. To be consistent, you should refuse to read their news. As far as I have observed, old fellow, you are the first to look for the war news. To-day you have been pluming yourself ever since we left Brighton, that it is your paper with your own particular war correspondent, which has alone got this news of the place with the crackjaw name. You should be more consistent. Don't read these wicked fellows' stories."

"Oh! that is quite another matter; one is naturally anxious to know what has happened, but there should be an official channel for all this military news."

"Again, let us be consistent," said the elderly merchant. "You were only inveigh-

ing two or three days ago, against the official channel used by the Bulgarians. What was the name of your Austrian officer, whose untruthful messages so annoyed you? No, you ought to be far more consistent. Personally, I have heard that these poor devils of war correspondents have no end of a time in furnishing you with these dishes which you so dislike and yet so ravenously eat. I don't know whether all the stories one hears are true, but looking at the map published in the rag of which you are so proud this morning, it would seem that this fighting took place a good thirty miles from the nearest cable office. You will see that the telegraph office from which it was sent is Constantinople. The battle began at daybreak, the story takes you up to 4 o'clock yesterday afternoon; and you read it at your breakfast table to-day. I am nothing of a soldier, but as a business man, it seems to me that somebody has put in some pretty quick work here. It may be all very wicked and naughty and unpatriotic or any-

thing you please, but this bit of work is going to make a lot of people buy this particular paper to-morrow and the next day. From a business man's point of view, it looks to me to be good work. Well, here we are."

. . . . . .

## II

FOUR Englishmen were seated at the centre table in the elegant dining-room of the Hotel Bristol, Vienna. They had all arrived at Vienna that morning by different routes. They were, however, all obsessed with a single idea. This was to arrive in the Balkans in the shortest possible time. They were four latter-day adventurers; that is, they were special correspondents of four great London dailies. They had been sent out post haste in order that they might arrive at the seat of probable war before hostilities actually broke out. It was quite evident that all the four knew their business. They were old acquaint-

ances and they had met in the hotel dining-room by chance.

As this brochure deals with a phase in the life of some of these latter-day adventurers, it may be permitted to give some description of these four representatives as they sit at meat. Three are men in the prime of life, the fourth is younger. All four, however, have stamped upon their features the expression found in those who have done things in the world; men who have been called upon to rely upon themselves in difficult and trying situations; men of self-control and indomitable energy; men of quick, versatile wit. Although they are all marked with this particular stamp of reliability, yet neither of the four is like the other. In reality, they have been engaged for the last ten to fifteen years in the most cut throat competition. In spite of this, they are the best of friends, and discuss openly their hopes and fears for the coming campaign; the different spheres to which they have been allotted or which they have chosen for themselves.

There is only one matter that remains secret between them, and that is their own and individual method of making their service to their employers. Egypt, South Africa, Manchuria, Persia, Morocco, have all been the scenes of desperate rivalry between them. Still here at Vienna, they meet on neutral ground, the best of friends, albeit the best of rivals.

"What made you choose the Bulgars?" said one of the adventurers, turning to the small clean-shaven man of the party.

"Unfortunately, I had no choice in the matter. I wanted to go with the Turks, but my people had a special man already in Constantinople, and they thought that he was better in with them than I should be. I don't want to go with these Slav peasants. I know that they will run at the first smell of a Turk, and I don't want to run with them."

"Of course, they will run," said the youngest of the group, a clean upstanding fellow. "The Bulgarian army will never be able to withstand the moral effect that centuries of

the Turk have ground into the Bulgarian race. I, myself, am going with the Turks, because I think I shall have something of a pull, owing to the fact that my people are well known in Constantinople."

"Why are you going with the Turks?" said the little man to the more silent of his companions.

"I am going with the Turk, mainly because I know the Turk."

"By which cryptic remark, you mean . . ."

"There is nothing cryptic about it. I mean what I say. I am going with the Turks because I know the Turks and I hope to be of greater service to my people with them, than I should be if I went with the Bulgarians."

"That is," said the little man, "you want to be on the winning side."

"It is always a good thing to be on the winning side," said the grave man. "When an army is winning, the authorities are inclined to be slack in the censorship, but if you think that the Turks are going to win, I should not

advise you to back that opinion at very long odds or at any price in high figures. Unless I am very much mistaken, the Bulgarians will just go through the Turks like a knife goes through butter."

"There again you are wrong," said the younger man. "I also know the Turks. They have an absolute contempt for these Bulgarians and Servians and you know how they treated the Greeks. I was there and saw the way the Turks rolled them up."

"I agree with that opinion," said the little man. "The terrible Turk is just going to wipe these people up."

"Very well," said the grave man, "we shall then probably take you prisoner; we will be very kind to you and we will prevent the Turks from ill-using you."

"From which side do you think it will be the easiest to get the stuff away," said the fourth man of the party, a robust, full-blooded member.

"I fancy it will be easiest to get it away

from the Bulgarian side," said the dogmatic little journalist. "You see they are simple folk, and they are sure not to understand the higher methods of general staff censorship. They have probably not given the matter a thought yet, and of course when they are disorganised and are in retreat, they will lose all control."

"I should not be over-anxious to bet on that possibility either," said the grave man. "Personally, I am glad I am with the Turks."

About half an hour after this conversation, the little party broke up, two of the group to take the Constantinople Express, the little man to join the Bulgarians and the fourth of the party to try his fortune with the Montenegrins.

. . . . . .

THE THEATRE OF WAR IN THE BALKAN STATES AND TURKEY

(The shaded sections are Macedonia and Novi-Bazar)

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UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

# With the Conquered Turk

## CHAPTER I

### THE MEET

THE thirty latter-day adventurers were out for all the journalistic plunder they could lay their hands upon. At the expense of the Ottoman Government they were to be conveyed in a special train to the scene of their depredations. This train was to carry the thirty ruffians who were representing all the great journals of Europe. It was also to carry the thirty odd other ruffians who were their servants, as well as wagon loads of horses and impedimenta. It always takes the station staff in Turkey some time to build up a train. The building up of a train such as this, however, was no ordinary matter, especially as it had to be tacked on to a troop train full of Redifs for the front. It was, therefore, a

great occasion, and the platform of the Stamboul station presented a memorable scene.

The thirty latter-day adventurers themselves were a cohort worth while coming miles to see. The average war correspondent has evolved for himself his own style and fashion in service dress. This is usually a mixture between that of the horse soldier of fiction and the stage villain. In some nationalities, this affectation in dress is more exaggerated than in others. For the most part the British adventurers of experience have toned down the exuberant affectation that marked the dress of the original military journalist. It is now even possible to find some of the more serious adventurers who are content to take the field soberly attired in civilian clothes. The adventurers who were accompanying the Turks, included Englishmen, Russians, Austrians, Frenchmen, Hungarians and one accidental Italian. Each group affected something of a national idiosyncrasy in the general tone of its outfit. That is to say, the Germans only

thinly veiled the fact that they were officers in disguise and strutted the platform with martial step. The Frenchmen, showing sentimental attachment to the cause which they had espoused, had adopted the khaki kalpak of the Turkish Army. The Russians, who are nothing if they are not thorough, had completely equipped themselves for horrid war. The Italian, who had slipped in by mistake, the peace between his country and the Ottoman Empire not yet having been arranged, had essayed the picturesque and was more like a corsair than any of his confrères. The Britishers were ill-sorted. The recruits to the fraternity had evidently seen some one of the old and obsolete type of war correspondent on the lecture platform. They were attired with the straps, watercasks, revolvers, bowie knives, Thermos flasks, Sam Brown belts, and all the other truck which it is the first lesson of active and serious-minded men to learn to discard. The veterans, and there were not many, were less pronounced in their official dress. In

their cases a stout shooting suit usually sufficed. There were, however, exceptions to these, and one gaunt Englishman wore the service uniform of the British army without its distinguishing badges. Another, and it is believed that he was a photographer, had evidently instructed his tailor to dress him on the lines of the boy scouts.

The Turkish General Staff had detailed four officers to have charge of this motley regiment. In reality, five officers were detailed, but the senior, exercising the very subtle wisdom of which he was possessed, selected to remain behind to escort the foreign attachés. The Senior Officer told off to the adventurers was a Bosniak, who had gleaned most of his European ideas in Berlin. When it is understood that this Bosniak shepherd was also an ex-deputy his capabilities can be readily assessed. His subordinates were a bibulous Albanian Bey, whose only noticeable fault was an excess of bonhomie, which on the slightest encouragement became inarticulate affection;

a little Levantine-Moslem lieutenant of the exquisite variety of Young Turk, a type easily confused with a barber's assistant; and a gross brute of a Pera corner-boy disguised for the occasion as a reserve officer of cavalry. If one dispensed with the veneer of *politesse Turque,* it was easy to see that this little staff of censors resented very much the duties that were thrust upon them. The only compensation really was the probability of being able to add to the daily ration through association with foreigners with means at their command, and likewise to evade the stresses of battle.

But we are getting away from the platform. The adventurers were due to leave Stamboul at five in the afternoon. As the whole world knows Turkish trains never run up to time. There was, therefore, a long wait before the adventurers were fairly under way. It was not an uninteresting period. To begin with, the first portion of the train, as has already been stated, was a troop train. Just at five o'clock, when the adventurers' express should

have steamed out of the station, the Redif battalion which was to accompany them marched on to the platform. It marched on bravely with band and banner. The commanding officer never troubled to dismount from the shaggy pony that served him as a charger, but rode at the head of his regiment right up to the train.

It might have been observed by any of the adventurers or any of their friends who were seeing them off, who, at the moment, had anything but a personal interest in the war, that this Redif battalion marched 600 strong. To control these bearded ruffians, there were only five officers including the commandant. It might also have been observed that the whole of the equipment of the battalion was freshly drawn from store; that the boots were innocent of dubbing or any kind of grease; that at the moment ranks were broken to permit of entraining, the majority of men took off their boots and proceeded to examine their feet. It might also have been observed that while this

Calling out the reservists in a Turkish village before the war

regiment was being entrained, one of the men in the rear company was taken ill. From the symptoms, it looked as if the man had Asiatic cholera. The medical officer with the battalion, however, did not seem to come to the same diagnosis, and the patient was put into a compartment with his fellows. In parenthesis, it may be said, that he was buried the next morning outside the station, where the train made a long halt.

As soon as the battalion had entrained and the men for the most part had divested themselves of their boots, a little impromptu entertainment was arranged to entice the foreign element present. It was designed to show the enthusiasm and patriotism of the assembled reservists. A company of musicians with knee-fiddles and reed-pipes fell in, and, to the sound of their graceless music, the light-footed of the battalion began a heavy Anatolian dance. In the meantime, the censors moved amongst the adventurers and pointed out the extreme high spirits of those dull dan-

cing soldiers, and invited all and sundry to make mental notes of the spirit stimulating the Turkish army. The adventurers were, however, far too much engaged with their own concerns. It was no mean business to control the amount of baggage that the average inexperienced correspondent considered appropriate to ensure mobility in the field. After some further delay, when the dancing had petered out, the battalion was entrained and the portion of the train reserved for the guests of the Ottoman Government backed into the siding.

It is now time to begin to individualise. To a large extent the story which is about to be told is the adventures which befell one of these latter-day buccaneers. The ordinary subscriber to a newspaper knows little of the difficulties that have to be faced and surmounted to enable him to read, over his breakfast coffee each morning, a true, first-hand, and unvarnished account of the great happenings that grace the pages. It is a little thing to open a

still damp newspaper and to read hurriedly between the mouthfuls of a meal the few descriptive lines that tell of a great battle fought, a victory won, a defeat suffered. It is no concern of the average reader that the appearance in his morning paper of these few descriptive lines is the result, it may be, of infinite resource, of terrible hardship, and perhaps even of desperate danger. He little knows or cares what anxieties have racked the mind of the man who secures the news, or of the expenditure of gold which the paper itself has had to make, to enable its readers to say, as they nod to friends at the railway station, "I see they had another big battle in the Balkans this morning."

The writer, therefore, in following the story of the thirty latter-day adventurers, will confine himself mainly to the adventures of one particular group of British correspondents. He will introduce this group for the first time as they take their places in the compartment allotted to them by the Bosniak Press censor.

It is composed of three adventurers. The first is a robust, hardy looking man who rejoices in the name of the Dumpling, and is renowned amongst London journals as a tempestuous recorder of stirring events. He has not confined his energies to wars alone. If there is a secret to be unravelled, a *cause célèbre* to be exploited, or a political eruption to be described, he is the man chosen, that the readers of his paper may have moving interest in its strongest lights. He is also experienced in the paths of war. He has followed the drum in South Africa; marched with the Japanese through Manchuria; and mixed with revolutionaries in half a dozen capitals.

Of his two companions in the compartment, one is a man of much the same age, and the other a boy in the first flush of energetic manhood. The former is known to his friends as the Centurion. He has the reputation of having participated in more warfare than any living man of his age. Usually he cloaks the energy and experience thus gained, under a

guise of fatuous levity. On this occasion, however, he is starting his campaign overweighted with a common heritage of a stay in Constantinople. He is suffering from a Levantine form of influenza, that is a type of disease in itself.

The youth is known to the confraternity as Jew's Harp Junior. He is not really a *bona fide* journalist, but is the brother of the representative of one of the great London dailies, who, owing to a certain nervous affection, and being of a vibratory nature, had earned the sobriquet of the "Jew's Harp."

By the time the adventurers and their baggage had been bundled into the train, and their retainers had been found places, there were many visitors collected to wish them Godspeed. Chief amongst these were some members of the corps of journalists permanently stationed in the Ottoman capital. These gentlemen were generally responsible for the ease and rapidity with which the adventurers had been mobilised at the base.

There were even ladies present to wish the press men adieux, for it would be a poor latter-day adventurer who could not mobilise a heart in the same space of time that it takes to mobilise a caravan. Jew's Harp Junior was a special favourite, and when at last frantic blasts upon the horn suggested that the adventurers were really leaving for the front, fair hands deftly pinned a *porte bonheur* upon the lapel of his coat.

A moment before the train started there was a rush for the carriage in which our group was installed. "How many are there in here?" said an agitated voice, "three only?" The owner of the agitated voice inserted his head himself, and before the Centurion or the Dumpling realised what was happening, a superfluity of baggage including a loose saddle and bridle were thrown into the compartment. As the train moved off, the owner of this new harness pushed himself in, stumbled over the collective wares, and apologised with true British directness, saying: "I am very

sorry, and I hope that I shall not inconvenience you, but I had to get in somewhere." The Centurion's remarks—his head racked with an influenza headache—will not bear repetition. The Dumpling maintained a diplomatic silence, whilst Jew's Harp Junior was overtly hostile.

The newcomer was a new recruit, a very new recruit, to the corps of British war correspondents. He was so new that he was unknown to the other occupants of the carriage. He was a fresh, good-looking, soft-spoken youth. From that moment, he was called the "Innocent," and subsequent events were to show how completely the soubriquet described the fresh naïveté of the man's delightful character. The Innocent's history requires a little elucidation. Although new to the rougher work of the adventurer's strange lot, the Innocent was no stranger to the paths of journalism. He was the foreign editor of a London daily. The directors of his paper, having determined, late in the day,

to send a representative to the seat of war, had not found a suitable selection ready to hand. They had, therefore, driven forth the Innocent and he had arrived at Constantinople twenty-four hours before the train of adventurers started for the front. He knew nothing of soldiers, less of horses and very little of men. To begin with, he made a bad impression in the coupé that he had selected. He had struck two old soldiers and the brother of a third old soldier. Moreover, the severest of the old soldiers was sick of a distemper.

The train glided slowly out of the station to the clash of the brazen instruments of the Redifs' band, playing discordantly from the depths of an empty luggage van. It was already dark and the lights of Stamboul on either side, were augmented by a firework display from many of the windows neighbouring the line. These displays were ordered to impress the foreign adventurers of the enthusiasm of the people at the state of war. As soon as the sounds of the band subsided and the oc-

The call for volunteers outside a mosque in Constantinople

cupants of the coupé could make themselves heard, Jew's Harp Junior remarked fatuously: "Well, we are really off."

The Centurion who was trying to disengage himself from the ill-ordered mass of saddlery that had accompanied the Innocent into the carriage, remarked: "We shall be lucky if we get out of this train within three days."

"Three days?" Innocent said, in the midst of an apology he was making to the Dumpling on account of a trunk he was trying to put upon the rack, "Why, I have brought no food with me."

This was too much for an old soldier like the Centurion who was sick in body and ill at ease:

"You don't mean to say that you have come into this carriage without food. Don't you realise what that means? You will have to live on three men who know their business and have brought just sufficient food for themselves. You have no right to come on this kind of business unless you are prepared to

look after yourself. Not only do you come and make yourself a nuisance to other people by forcing yourself into their carriage, but you make it imperative that they keep you as well." Innocent was absolutely knocked out by the sudden and savage attack. He apologised again and offered to leave the compartment at the first stop. The Centurion was somewhat appeased and he sank back upon his own heap of baggage to nurse his headache. Thus the adventurers started for the front.

In order that the reader may appreciate the condition of affairs at which this trainload of correspondents were hoping to assist, it is necessary to give some superficial detail of the Turkish operations as they had so far developed. It must be remembered that this is mainly the story of the Centurion. It does not, therefore, profess to be a history of the Balkan War, or even a comprehensive account of the Turkish operations throughout Macedonia. It is really only a narrative of the Turkish campaign in Thrace, as far as it was

possible for one single correspondent to follow it, and to furnish his newspaper with a consecutive narrative. All the side issues of the campaign and the mire of diplomacy which led up to the outbreak of hostilities against the Montenegrins, Servians, Greeks and whatnots, are affairs apart from this story.

The Turkish General Staff believed that by the date of the outbreak of war they had distributed their armies in sufficient strength in Macedonia to enable them to hold the minor invasions in check until such time as their main army in Thrace was able to defeat the chief Bulgarian force. By this success, which they knew must be gained in Thrace, they trusted to turn the whole scale of battle. It was their intention to march up the valley of the Maritza and by sheer weight of numbers to force the Allies to conform to their advance and thus render any side-advantages that might have been obtained in Macedonia or elsewhere, to be but temporary. The Turks argued that the dislocated invaders would be

forced to come tumbling back to their own countries to defend them from their all-conquering progress. Such was the scheme of the Ottoman General Staff working night and day in the Shereskiet buildings in Stamboul. It was an ambitious plan of campaign, and on paper it read so true that the officers of the General Staff themselves not only believed that it was practicable, but also that it was certain of success. They worried little about those affairs of administration and supply which in all campaigns are the chief essential. In order to carry out this proposed rôle of the offensive, the Ottoman General Staff intended to have concentrated four army corps on the line Adrianople—Kirk Kilisse. They also intended to prepare an expeditionary force at the port of Media, which, when the main army began its irresistible forward movement, was to have been rapidly transported by way of the Black Sea to some convenient point on the Bulgarian coast line in the vicinity of Varna. The Turks counted on their num-

bers. In this they made a similar error to that which we ourselves made in South Africa, when we foolishly counted a man, a rifle and horse, no matter the experience of the man, as a military asset. The Turks relied upon their very excellent method of mobilisation, which they pushed with extreme vigour. The Redifs arrived up in their thousands and were equipped and armed at the arsenals, to be spirited away into Thrace by the trainload.

Competent British observers who saw these happenings at the base, however, shook their heads and said little. They saw units prepared to take the field that were so short of officers, that the majority of the sections were commanded by sergeants. They saw men who had never used anything but sandals in their lives, trying to march in cheap contract boots that hurt the feet; they saw men who were due within thirty-six hours to take their places in the troop train, learning, not only the goose step, but also the mechanism of the rifle

for the first time; they saw horses that had been taken that very morning out of the hackney carriages in the Grande Rue de Pera, turned into gun-teams and driven by drivers who knew nothing of the art. The competent observers saw all these things and shook their heads. Unless there was something that was much better in front of this rabble, the chances of their marching up the valley of the Maritza were very small indeed.

The General Staff, however, were satisfied that all was well. In Kirk Kilisse they had an adequate force sent forward as an advance guard to cover the concentration that was taking place behind. It is true that they had been forced to leave the first initiative to the Bulgarians, but they had good information as to their movements; they knew practically the exact strength of the invasion that was already pouring over the frontier. They were perfectly confident that they would be able to deal with this invasion in due course, when the columns of Bulgarians were entangled in the

mountains north of Kirk Kilisse. For this reason they had only held Mustapha Pasha and the Tundza Passes lightly. They were so confident as to the results of the fighting between the Bulgarian and their own advance guards from October 18th to the 22nd, that they agreed that the moment was ripe to allow their foreign guests to join the army at the front. Kirk Kilisse, therefore, was the destination of this trainload of adventurers with whose fortunes the reader is now identified. As a matter of history, at the very moment that the train was moving out of the station, the Turkish arms were suffering the first of those paralysing disasters which during the earlier weeks of the war, lost to them forever their European provinces.

## CHAPTER II

### TO THE FIRST COVERT

TO understand the situation in the middle of which the trainload of latter-day adventurers found themselves at daybreak on the following morning, it is necessary to continue the brief sketch of the early history of the campaign in Thrace. The Turkish armies had been divided into two wings. Of these the right wing was commanded by Mahmud Muktear Pasha, the left was commanded by Abdullah Pasha, the latter reserving to himself the right of Generalissimo provided he ever had the opportunity of exercising control, or of communicating with his subordinates. The selection of these two officers was the outcome of a desire to humour German military feeling and the leading sentiment of the Committee of Union and Progress. Abdullah was one of Von der Goltz's swans,

while Mahmud Muktear was a Committee bully. Goodness only knows from where they raked up Abdullah, but Mahmud Muktear was minister of marine when the war broke out, and was transferred hurriedly from the admiralty to a command in the field. Altogether there were supposed to be five *corps d'armée* composing the army of the offensive in Thrace. These were the First Army commanded by Omar Taver; the Second commanded by Torgad Shevket; the Third commanded by Mahmud Muktear; the Fourth commanded by Ahmed Abouk and the Seventeenth (commander unknown). The Seventeenth Corps was a kind of Colonel Bogie of the Thracian links. Every corps commander in turn was waiting upon it during the most critical moments of battle. No one ever seemed to have seen it, and every defeated general, sooner or later, traced his failure to its non-arrival. If the truth be known the Seventeenth Corps was never really put together. It was to have been composed en-

tirely from Redif divisions. Such units as should have gone to its credit, even if they were mobilised—which is doubtful—were probably stolen on the railway by the first divisional general who opined that he was short of men and then ran away when battle was joined. Anyway the Seventeeth were the phantom cohorts of Lule Burgas.

The first four corps named above were to have concentrated on the line Adrianople—Kirk Kilisse in the following order from right to left:—Mahmud Muktear, Omar Taver, Torgad Shevket, Ahmed Abouk with the phantom Seventeenth somewhere in the rear on communications. It must not be thought that either of these *corps d'armée* were up to strength. Most of the Nizam Corps had contributed their quota to the Adrianople Garrison. Some of Torgad Shevket's Second Corps had been left at the Dardanelles while no unit in the whole army was up to the intended war strength. Many in fact were skeleton units padded out with any

Mahmud Muktear Pasha, Commander of the Turkish Third Army Corps.
"Mahmud Muktear was among the earliest of the fugitives. He had misgivings as to the safety of the rest of his corps established along the Viza Road." *See page 27*

class of Redif that the mobilisation agents could lay hands upon and hereby hangs the moral of the whole debâcle.

When on October 19, 1912, the Bulgarian invasion had become a very serious affair the Ottoman armies that should have been upon the alignment already indicated were really very much in the following order of chaotic concentration. An advance guard from the Third Corps which was straggling up the Sarai-Viza Road was at Kirk Kilisse. The First Corps was concentrating at Baba Eski preparatory to moving up into the line from which the offensive was to start. The Fourth Corps was collecting at Lule Burgas, while the Second Corps, such as there were of it, had left the railway at Tchorlu or the boat at Rodosto to reach the line of concentration by march route. On October 20th and 21st the Turkish force in Kirk Kilisse seemed to have held up the Bulgarian advance. Mahmud Pasha was here in person. The war ministers' staff at the Shereskiet was fearfully

"bucked." They issued orders for the foreign press correspondents to proceed on the 23rd direct to Kirk Kilisse. The foreign attachés were warned to follow the next day.

This optimism, however, was doomed to be short-lived, because, before even the order directing the correspondents to proceed to the front could be countermanded, the disaster which was the forerunner of the debâcle that befell the Ottoman arms in Thrace, had taken place at Kirk Kilisse. On the night of October 22nd-23rd the Bulgarians rushed the Kirk Kilisse outpost line. The Turkish estimate of night outposts is conceived very much in the same light-hearted spirit as that in which the night watchman in India approaches his duties. That they were rushed in the damp, wet weather that initiated the campaign is not a matter of surprise. It is only astonishing that they have not been more often similarly overthrown. The advance guards billeted in and about the Forty Churches just broke and fled down the Viza Road before the Slav

bayonets. Mahmud Muktear was among the earliest of the fugitives. He had misgivings as to the safety of the rest of his corps established along the Viza Road. The three divisions of the First Corps were the nearest Turkish gros to the scene of the disaster. They were ordered up hot foot to repair the desperate set-back. The three divisions of the First Corps, like the units of the Third Corps, on the Viza Road, were echeloned between the line of concentration and Baba Eski. The Bulgarians, profiting by their initial success, caught the three divisions of the First Corps in detail and severally defeated them at Kavakli, Yenije and Islamkuey. This, however, is another story. The situation, as it concerned the trainload of adventurers on the morning of October 24th was that it was not expedient for the train to proceed to Kirk Kilisse as originally intended.

"Where the blazes are we?" It was broad daylight and the Dumpling had his fat person half out of the window. This remark

was addressed to his companions at large, who, tied up in knots with their baggage and the Innocent's saddlery, were pretending sleep. The Centurion looked a perfect worm and his cough suggested to all within earshot that he had at least one foot in the grave. Dumpling's dragoman now appeared with a tray. He had conjured two cups of Turkish coffee from somewhere. He also had information. The Bosniak Shepherd had been talking over the telephone with someone. That someone had given orders that the train was not to proceed, but was to be side-tracked at Seidler, and there await orders.

This information interested the Centurion. In spite of his influenza he pulled on his leather jerkin and sauntered out. He walked out past the station buildings behind which the Redifs were burying the comrade who had died of cholera during the night. As he cleared the compound the Centurion thrust his hands into his leather pockets and whistled. "What a country for cavalry!" was the

thought uppermost in his mind. As far as eye could reach he was surrounded by an expanse of rolling down-land.

It was a compromise between the high veldt of South Africa and the grassy uplands of Sussex and Hampshire. Then something moving caught the Centurion's trained eye. It looked like transport. A long line of men and animals was coming out of one of those depressions which are peculiar to this kind of country. The Centurion was without his glasses so he sauntered back to the train. By the time he had returned with the glasses the movement from the north had definitely materialised. The whole countryside was full of country wagons. At first the Centurion thought they must be empty transports coming back from the army. The glasses, however, suggested another story. This was no army transport; everything about the movement was civilian. The columns consisted of buffalo wagons, bullock carts and donkey shays. Each conveyance was packed tight

with household goods, women, and children. A crowd of peasants in frenzied haste were urging the animals through the mire. The Centurion put away his glasses and wandered back to the train. Something had happened. Either the Turks had found it necessary to clear the country of the entire civilian populace, or there had been something of the nature of a Turkish disaster up in the north. It was not long before the head of this transport column reached the confines of the station. Then it was possible to see that this was no ordinary clearance of the country. Wild-eyed women with their legs and skirts mired to the knees, were struggling through the morasses that in Turkey pass for roads. Numbers were dragging their children beside them; many were weighted down with crying infants. Old men who had almost reached the perpetual fireside age, already foundered, were clinging to the carts in which tired and distressed animals were toiling under the blows of younger peasants. It was a flight, a

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"Something had happened"

dishevelled flight of the populace; an exodus brought on by actual terror. It was evident that these wretched peasants had just seized whatever *Lares et Penates* that came to hand, and had cast them with their infants upon the wagons without waiting to sort out the wheat from the tares. Descendants of a Nomad race they had instinctively taken the road to save themselves from some terror that was behind them. Judging from the state of the animals and the wretched women and children, these fugitives must have been toiling down the mud tracks all through the livelong night. Without doubt such a panic had been caused by events of a serious nature. Of itself the state of these fugitives was a sufficient military reason for the halt that the adventurers' train had made since daybreak.

But what an occasion for the adventurers themselves? As soon as the story went along the train that refugees were arriving, there was a kind of galvanic stampede among the newspaper men in the train. The journalists

were anxiously calling for their dragomen. These later were, with difficulty, unearthed from beneath the horse rugs in the cattle trucks. The photographers and cinematograph artists brought out their cameras and film-engines with such rapidity that the Bosniak Shepherd felt it his patriotic duty to forbid anyone from taking photographs.

Misguided worthy! If a squad of metropolitan policemen have often found it impossible to prevent the Cockney photographic artist from taking pictures in London's Holy of Holies, how much more impossible would it be for the slow-thinking Turk to prevent the same experts from carrying out their instinctive functions when the magic word "refugee" was in the air. This was the first lance that the Bosniak Shepherd splintered with the adventurers. It was not a heavy one, but there was no question as to whom the heralds would have adjudged the success.

The Centurion who was still feeling as if he had been beaten with sticks, retired to his

compartment to study the map. The train was at Seidler Station; that is, it would be about twelve miles from Lule Burgas, the nearest big village, and at least thirty miles from Kirk Kilisse, where on the preceding day the Turkish troops had been said to be holding their own against the Bulgarians. It was perfectly evident, therefore, that something untoward had happened at Kirk Kilisse. As the Centurion argued: If these refugees had travelled at the rate of two miles an hour all night, they would just have made the distance from the environment of Kirk Kilisse to Seidler. Whatever had happened, therefore, must have happened at Kirk Kilisse just 24 hours previous to the arrival of the adventurers at Seidler. The Centurion sent for his dragoman.

This is to introduce John. John was a great man and, as he will appear on several occasions throughout this narrative, it may be just as well formally to introduce him here. John is an Armenian from Broussa. That

will be sufficient for anyone who knows the Levant. To those who are fortunate enough to be ignorant of the Levant, it is necessary to say that John has the flashing eye and the truculent moustache of a desperado and gay Lothario and the heart of a whelk. Nevertheless John has his points; one of which is a great desire to be a British subject. He has tried a good many things. He has done five years in the French Foreign Legion, five years in South Africa and Rhodesia. He has also induced an English school teacher to share his fortunes for better or worse. He had, too, before he took service with the Centurion, an inordinate estimate of his own qualities. Withal the Centurion liked John although it would have been very difficult for anyone who might have seen the two together really to believe this statement.

John of the flashing eye was instructed by the Centurion to interview some of the refugees. Whereupon John, quite understanding what was required of him, strode out into the

most prominent place in the station, summoned four or five of the wretched peasants to his presence and in strident tones proceeded to harangue them. At this moment the Bosniak Shepherd was returning from a futile attempt to coerce the cinematograph mongers. His eye fell upon John. Here at least was a responsive target. The Centurion was watching this from the carriage. He didn't even hear what the Bosniak Shepherd said to John, but in one second the flash went out of the latter's flaming eyes and the heart of a whelk asserted itself. John slunk into obscurity on the far side of the train.

To all intents and purposes, however, the Centurion knew what had happened. A long experience had sharpened his deductive faculties. His colleagues in the compartment, however, were boiling over with excitement. The Innocent, his eyes flaming, came back, and settling a luncheon basket, began to write a despatch. The Dumpling, who was possessed of one of those natures who can never

see another man doing unnecessary and useless work without feeling that he too should be working, began to buzz about the train to find out if there were any means of despatching a telegram.

It is about time to introduce intimately another of the chief actors on this stage. This is the Diplomat. The Diplomat came to take counsel of the Centurion. The Diplomat is one of those charming young men that the Universities from time to time push into journalism. They are a sort of Heaven-sent leaven designed by Providence to save Fleet Street from the level of the Press Club. Hypnotised by the great influence of the journal that employed him, the Diplomat lived only to stoke its foreign department with telegraphic fuel. It mattered little to him whether the fuel he supplied was superior silkstone or disreputable coke; the furnace in London was a gaping maw; the heat there was sufficient to devour coals of all qualities. The Diplomat, moreover, was possessed of that

particular genius of divination, which can always find value in news that the majority of his colleagues, less gifted than he, would reject as worthless. The Diplomat was bound to the Centurion not only in the matter of common sympathies and affection, but in a business relationship in that they were equal partners in a motor car. The Diplomat also was new to the tented field, and he came to the grey head of the Centurion, from time to time, for advice. At this particular moment he was red hot. He began with the magic poison of the word "refugee," which had already permeated his brain. This indeed was fuel of the silkstone brand. He also was possessed of a grievance.

"Look here," he said, addressing the Centurion vehemently. "Do you know what I have just heard? These refugees say that they have come all the way from Kirk Kilisse, and that the Bulgarians took the place yesterday morning. They also say that the Bulgarian cavalry is pursuing them. They say that we

may expect the troopers over those hills at any moment. Also these brutes of Bulgarian cavalry have been committing the most outrageous atrocities on the Mohammedan women and children. That is why these poor people are so terror-struck. Don't you think we ought to get our horses out of the trucks?"

The Centurion slowly took up a bottle of Aspirin, which he had called in to his personal aid and remarked: "There are two things, Diplomat, which contradict each other in your story. Either the Bulgarian cavalry has not been committing any atrocities on the women and children—which from your standpoint would be a pity—and is pursuing, or it has been committing atrocities and is not pursuing. You see the two pastimes do not synchronise. I am speaking now as a cavalryman. It is not, therefore, necessary to unbox the nags. How are you going to get your horses out of these trucks? It requires a platform or a ramp. The equipment of Seidler furnishes neither of these commodities. It is

perfectly certain that something desperate has been happening up Kirk Kilisse way. These people are seeing red and have the fear of God or rather the Bulgarians in their hearts, but I don't think the trouble they fear is quite so close as you imagine it to be. Anyway, we have not heard the sound of a gun yet. It will be time to become anxious when you can hear the guns."

"But there has been desperate fighting up there and we have not seen it," urged the Diplomat.

The Centurion shrugged his shoulders. "One cannot expect to see everything; one must miss something."

"If I only felt sure," said the Diplomat, and here it was that he came down to the real trouble that was agitating his mind, "that Jew's Harp Senior was not getting some special facilities out of this, I would be more than happy. I don't believe a word of this story of his being left behind in Constantinople sick. It is just a plant by which he is going to get

some special facilities. He has got a car and I believe he is going to get up to the front by himself."

"That he was sick when we left yesterday, I know," said the Centurion. "I went to the trouble of ascertaining myself whether he had a temperature or not, so you may dismiss your theory in part. That he will get special facilities is quite possible. Everything is possible in this country if you can make it worth anybody's while to do you a special service. Anyway you are looking for trouble in advance. With the best motor car in the world, and the best will of the Turkish General Staff, Jew's Harp could not be in front of us at this moment. You, Diplomat, are, therefore, much nearer the guns than he is. You, like the natural-born soldier you are, desire to march for the guns. You are quite right, and as soon as you hear the guns, it will be time enough to march to them."

While the adventurers were agitating themselves over the refugees the Bosniak Shepherd

was busily engaged at the station telegraph trying to get orders. As was to be expected it was totally impossible for him to find Head Quarters Staff or anybody in authority who could give him instructions. As a Turk without instructions is always immobile the train also remained immobile. The Bosniak Shepherd would not instruct the station-master to let it go either backwards or forward.

About eight in the morning it was seen that a down train was arriving from Lule Burgas. As it was possible to see this train for at least five miles before it arrived the Centurion wandered up the line as far as the distant signal. There was a water tank here and it seemed probable that the engine would be stopped to take water. As the train arrived it presented the most remarkable sight that the Centurion ever remembered having seen upon a railway line. Not only was the top of every wagon and car crowded with every class of Turkish humanity, but the cow-catcher and plates of the engine were covered with khaki-clad fig-

ures clinging on to the locomotive in the most cramped and dangerous attitudes. At first sight the Centurion thought that there must be some truth in the story of the Bulgarian cavalry being in pursuit and that this train had been furnished with a special guard for purposes of protection; but as the great engine snorted up to the water tank he saw to his amazement that these men clinging to the plates were unarmed.

The engine driver was a Greek who spoke French and the Centurion climbed up and joined him on the foot-plate. This train had only come from Lule Burgas, a matter of twelve miles away, yet the engine driver had a most astounding story to tell. He said that the Bulgarians had taken Kirk Kilisse by assault on the previous night: that their success had been made in collusion with a certain section of Turkish Bulgars in the Ottoman Army: that the entire Turkish force at Kirk Kilisse had fled in disorder: and that the fugitives, having thrown away their arms, began to

stream into Lule Burgas on the preceding evening. By early morning all the roads leading into Lule Burgas were a seething mass of panic-stricken soldiers, terrified peasants and fleeing ammunition carts. Then, somewhere in the vicinity of the town, people had begun to fire rifles. The cry immediately went up that the Bulgarians were descending on the town. The panic communicated itself to certain Redif troops belonging to the Fourth Army Corps that were camped behind the village. Just as the engine driver had received his line clear the crowd of refugees and fugitive soldiers burst into the station and boarded his train in the manner in which they could now be seen.

A more astounding sight the Centurion had certainly never seen in his whole experience of war. Not only was the train packed with fugitive soldiers, but there were fugitive officers as well. The Centurion tried to get into conversation with one of them. He was of the same type as the majority of the Young Turk

officers,—a young man well under thirty. His eyes were starting out of his head and he babbled confusedly. He was in such a state of mental terror that it was impossible for him to collect his ideas or to speak coherently. Of such a quality is the half-baked soldier in which England pretends to believe.

It was evident that a disaster of a very grave nature had overtaken the Turkish arms, but there was one saving clause. The Greek engine driver, who was a man with perfectly clear ideas, said that the panic had only been partial, that the Nizam troops of the Second and Fourth Army Corps in the vicinity of Lule Burgas were unaffected by the stampede and were being moved forward at once to re-establish the Turkish positions.

The Centurion returned to the station and was debating in his mind whether it would be possible to find some planks to serve as a gangway by which to detrain his horses. He felt sure that the Bosniak Shepherd would almost immediately receive orders for that portion of

the train containing the adventurers to be sent back in the direction of the base. Providence stepped in, however, to order the immediate adventures of the correspondents. The rear part of the train that had just come in from Lule Burgas on its way south in passing through the station left the rails, and for the moment there was a definite block upon the Turkish communications.

From midday to evening the situation inside the station itself was interesting enough. Added to the mass of fugitives that were passing by road there was this derailed trainload of panic-stricken deserters. The battalion of Redifs that belonged to the adventurers' train, as soon as they fraternised with the refugees, became obstreperous. With their usual improvidence or, should it be said, incapacity for all administration, the authorities at the base had started this battalion from Stamboul without an ounce of bread. Now that their train was apparently held up at Seidler, where there was nothing to be procured, the poor wretched

Redifs had the prospect of a forty-eight hours' fast.

The stories of the fighting which the panic-stricken deserters promulgated amongst them, also, had no very softening effect upon their nerves. The men paraded up and down the length of the train and gazed with longing eyes at the wagons packed with cases of stores which were the property of the Giaours. The panicmongers themselves were also feeling a little hungry.

It is not quite certain what happened, but the adventurers suddenly heard the voice of their bibulous Bey raised in anger. He was expostulating with the round dozen of Ottoman officers who had come down from Lule Burgas. It is quite evident, that in his more sober moments, the bibulous Bey had the command of very caustic language. If the roundness of the backs of his brother officers as he harangued them is any criterion, the sarcasm was biting in the extreme. Anyway he put some sort of life into the despicable crowd, and

"The rear part of the train that had just come in left the rails, and for the moment there was a definite block upon the Turkish communications." *See page 45*

a certain number of the panicmongers were arrested and thrown into an outhouse and kept there under guard.

About two o'clock in the afternoon, another train arrived from the direction of Lule Burgas. This brought a breakdown gang with the more assuring news that the panic had only been partial; that it had been localised, and that confidence was re-established. It was observed all the same as a discount to this that there were a certain number of skulking forms in khaki in the train which did not belong to the breakdown gang. The expert with the gang, after he had looked at the wreck, said that it would take him four to five hours to make a deviation that would be practicable. His gang set to work with a rapidity which was quite remarkable in a country where manual labour moves slowly. A new ramp was thrown up beside the embankment, and the whole permanent way was lifted up and pushed bodily on to the new ramp.

As it was certain that the work would not

be effected in the time the expert suggested, the Centurion, finding that it was impracticable to think of detraining the horses, resolved to do a little reconnoissance on foot in the direction of Lule Burgas. A walk of three miles to what appeared to be the top of the ridge separating Seidler from Lule Burgas only produced that sensation of an interminable rise which will be familiar to those who have toiled up the slopes of the South African veldt. There was nothing that could be effected by dismounted reconnoissance, and the Centurion wandered aimlessly about until it was time to return. The events of the day had made a great impression upon him. During his stay in Constantinople, he had come to the conclusion that nothing but very quick and decisive successes could have maintained discipline in the troops he saw mobilised in the capital. Ever since the revolution the officers of the army, with the notable exception of one corps, had divided the attention they should have given to their military duties with politi-

cal coquetry. The field of action of the politician is not a healthy training-ground for the soldier. The politician's sphere of influence and action is found in cities. The young officer of the Turkish army, therefore, instead of concentrating his mind upon his one essential duty, had fallen away after the flesh pots of political interests. The progress towards real efficiency in the Army which has been advertised by the late Minister of War and the Young Turk propaganda was mere eyewash. It was almost entirely confined to the purchase of material. The purchase of war-like stores meant heavy commissions for those empowered to make them. The Ottoman army, therefore, soon possessed in great quantities the material, arms, and other commodities upon which the highest commissions are paid. There was no real organisation or system of economic administration. The Adjutant General's department under this system was not as profitable as that of the Quarter-Master General's. Therefore it escaped attention.

Moreover the Turkish staff was obsessed with the strange heresy that a half trained Turk was the equal of any Greek or Slav soldier that should take the field. Modern warfare, however, cares little for tradition and martial instincts except as a basis for skilled workmanship. It is to-day a question of handling exquisite machinery. None but skilled workmen can hope to stand the strain. Those who claim otherwise are either knaves or fools. The first fruits of this vicious incompetency had been demonstrated in the desperate scenes witnessed at Seidler Station, which, be it remembered, was over thirty miles distant from the nearest town where fighting had taken place.

"The first fruits of this vicious incompetency had been demonstrated in the desperate scenes witnessed at Seidler Station, which, be it remembered, was over thirty miles distant from the nearest town where fighting had taken place"

## CHAPTER III

### BLANK

THE Centurion flattered himself that he could exercise control in all circumstances. In fact, he had been heard to say he would sooner be seen dead than for it to be apparent that he had lost his temper. There are, however, the exceptional circumstances which prove the rule. In the early hours of the morning following the events narrated in the last chapter, the train conveying the adventurers arrived at Tchorlu. It will be remembered that the Centurion was suffering from a severe attack of Constantinople influenza. He had been harried by the events of the previous day, and felt keenly the fact that he had been forced, with the others, to go back instead of forward, when big events were taking place at the front. Now that Tchorlu was reached, the Bosniak Shepherd issued orders

that this was the place where the adventurers would detrain. Things were very uncomfortable that morning. There had been difficulty in getting any food other than canned tongue, the most appalling of nutriments, when it is the basis of four consecutive meals. The Innocent also had been troublesome. Half the night he had been arranging his makeshift table (which was a luncheon basket, not his own, be it remembered) in order to write volumes of copy. His arrangement of the table had interfered with the night's rest of the others. The Centurion dragged himself out of the compartment at Tchorlu to be told by the imperious John that somebody's servant had stolen his (the Centurion's) bridle. At this point he came very nearly forgetting all his principles in the matter of self-control. He told John to lead him to the man who had dared to touch his bridle. It was a pet bridle, a 9th Lancer bit, that he had had for nearly twenty years, and it hurt him to think that some knavish syce had stolen it in the night.

But his troubles did not end here. As he hurried forward to seize the delinquent, his foot caught in a point-rod and he tripped headlong into an ash-pit. Now the Centurion was not seriously hurt, but it was a culminating event in a sequence of trying circumstances. Therefore, when he found his pet bridle adorning the head of a scraggy looking Constantinople pony, he forgot all his precepts, and then there was the devil to pay. Three or four syces ran howling into the wilderness.

The pathetic part of the whole affair was that the master of the thief, who was totally incapable of telling one bridle from another, thinking that all looked like the things that you put into a horse's mouth to stop him with, was persistent in claiming the 9th Lancer bit as his own. However, he saw murder in the Centurion's eye and the matter was at last satisfactorily arranged.

When the Centurion got back to the compartment, the orders were issued for the whole lot to detrain. In the meantime, the Innocent

was to be seen surreptitiously stealing down an adjacent train that was crammed full of refugees. It was said that this train was on the point of starting for Constantinople. The Innocent had a big envelope and a silver medjidie in his hand. With the air of a conspirator he was trying to find one or another amongst the refugees intelligent enough to convey his copious labours of the night before to the British post office in Constantinople. The Innocent was taking his labours very seriously. The Centurion, as he watched him searching amongst the indescribable mass of humanity that was crushed into the open trucks of that south bound train, wondered whether he realised that everybody's letters had gone south the night before.

The detraining at Tchorlu was a very serious affair. The Bosniak Shepherd and his staff were absolutely without official information. They did not even know what they would do with the thirty-odd ruffians that the train vomited forth, to say nothing of their

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"The indescribable mass of humanity crushed into the open trucks of that south bound train"

stacks of goods, their horses and retinue of servants. Everything was bundled out on to the roadside. By the mercy of Providence it was not raining. Then came the question of transport. With the exception of the Germans, none had come supplied with transport. The old and wary knew they would be able to hire or purchase transport locally. The new and confiding had believed the promises of the Turkish staff that transport would be supplied them at the expense of the Government.

All things, however, right themselves in the end. Horses were taken from the trucks and hired transport was ultimately found. After about five hours' delay, the Bosniak Shepherd and his staff went out to prospect for ground in which to camp. The village of Tchorlu is some three miles distant from the railway station. The Bosniak Shepherd first reconnoitred in the vicinity of the village. This reconnoissance evidently proved unsatisfactory, as, after a lot of chat, it was decided that the adventurers should pitch their camp on the

side of the hill about half way between the military barracks, which are near the station, and the village.

The troubles of the adventurers endured in getting into that camp will interest few but themselves. The Centurion, who at least knew something about camps and camping, had his tent standing before the rest were unpacked. Then to him came the Corner Boy, the junior of the Bosniak Shepherd's staff. This Beggar-on-horseback seeing that the Centurion's tent was already pitched, came up with the request that it should be moved ten paces to the left. The Centurion, whom the events of the morning had made unapproachable, said something in Egyptian Arabic, which conveyed a sufficiency of meaning to the Corner Boy. His eyes flashed and he said he "issued the order" that the tent should be moved. The reply he got sent him off to the Bosniak Shepherd, livid with rage, to whom he explained that if it had not been for the *politesse Turque* due to a guest,

the Centurion would have been a dead man.

However, these little difficulties were ultimately settled and an astonishing encampment grew up on the slope of the bleakest and coldest hillside that was ever allotted to amateur soldiers. It was an interesting camp to watch. Fully half of the adventurers had never been in a tent before. They knew nothing of the ways of camping and horses. The tents sprang up in little groups and above each group there fluttered an indication of the nationality of the occupants. Cook-houses, horse lines, servants' quarters, were all indiscriminately arranged in the smallest possible space and it was obvious that if the spot remained a camp for any period, it would soon become so foul as to be untenable.

The several groups of adventurers seemed to reck nothing of this. The French settled down to the, to them, artistic business of adequate feeding, the Englishmen to devise means to work the Censor so as to fulfil the object of their missions, the Austrians and Germans to

make themselves as comfortable as they possibly could without the trouble of mixing themselves up with any dangerous adjuncts of war, the Russians, who are desperate persons, to fill note books with details that would be a joy to the hearts of a German Bench trying an espionage case.

It may be explained here, in parenthesis, that in accepting the assistance of these thirty adventurers, for the purpose of giving to the world a true and faithful history of their successes, the Turks had endeavoured to keep the business of correspondents *en régle*. They had drawn up a stringent schedule of rules and regulations by which to order and control the corps. The terms of this document were so stringent, that any man who signed them in good faith was, profanely speaking, putting his head in a noose. The old soldiers amongst the English adventurers put their heads together rather than into the noose and decided to draw up a set of conditions of their own, by which they intimated to the Turkish Staff that they

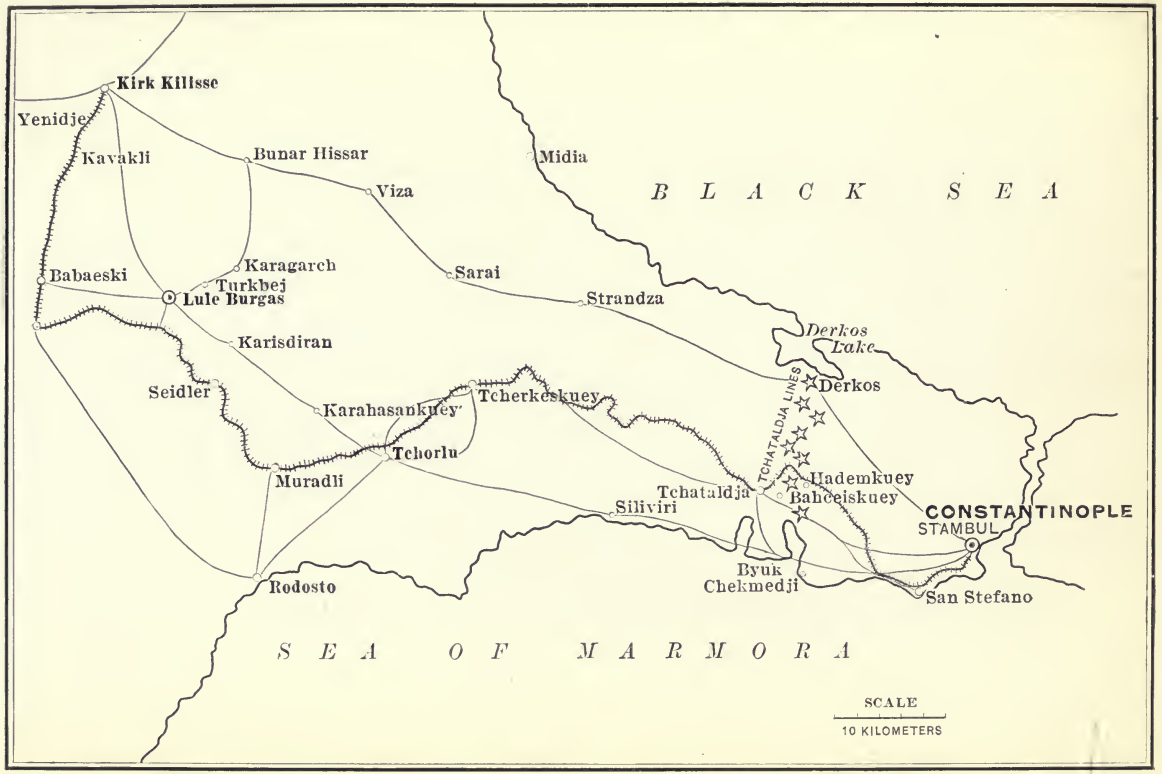
would never agree to the original conditions unless their own were complied with. The smiling head of the Censor's Department in the Shereskiet, who always had an eye to the main chance, and who was never too busy to find time for a fat meal, said, there and then, that the whole thing was a matter of form, and that the old and trusted soldiers amongst the adventurers might make whatsoever conditions they liked. All conditions were agreeable to his department, and so the matter was settled.

Arrived at Tchorlu the correspondents of the English papers were anxious to communicate all that they had seen in the last twenty-four hours to their journals.

The Dumpling took this matter in hand. The Bosniak Shepherd and the smiling head of the Censor's Bureau in Stamboul, however, were not the same person. The Bosniak was devoid of humour and imagination. He produced the official instructions. These insisted that all communications, including even pri-

vate letters, must be written in French. It was no use to insist that the Chief Censor had made promises in a diametrically opposite sense. The Bosniak's press formula was his Bible. The Dumpling, though he wrote French as easily as he spoke that language, had visions of the mutilation his best Molière would undergo at the hands of English sub-editors. He spoke his mind openly to the Bosniak on the subject with the result that the latter hardened his heart.

Then all the little world at Tchorlu began to write telegrams in French. Goodness only knows what they wrote about. No one else is likely to know because after twenty-four hours' delay the Bosniak returned all the telegrams with the intimation that, as there was no operator at Tchorlu that could telegraph in Roman, he suggested that the adventurers had better put their messages into Turkish. This was usurping the province of comic opera. The mental condition of the Dumpling gave grave cause for apprehension when he was




Map of the final battles of the Bulgarian campaign

made to understand that the French tongue was not a sufficiently high test for his paper's sub-editors, but that they would have to be tried in Turkish.

The Centurion only laughed as he intimated all languages were equal to his paper. He did not add that his already established *dak* was taking messages in English daily to the base. That was no one's affair but his own.

A considerable estrangement grew up at this period between the Bosniak Shepherd and his flock. The flock were now introduced to that exquisite mental torture known as polite Turkish passive resistance. The Bosniak had broken his second lance with his charges, and the heralds gave this bout to him. The Corps of Adventurers was then politely but firmly "gated." Orders were issued that no one was to leave camp without special permission and an escort. The Pera Corner Boy was placed on picket duty at the gates of Tchorlu village and everything living belonging to the adventurers' camp was denied entrance. The Cor-

ner Boy was really "laying" for the Centurion. The latter, however, was not walking into any such foolish trap with his eyes open. He just sulked and nursed his distemper in his tent. The Innocent, however, improved the shining hour by learning to ride a superannuated grey pony and committing Von der Goltz and Yorck von Wartenburg to memory. Nothing but the shortest cut to the complete war correspondent would satisfy his ambition.

Then something happened. No one beyond the parties concerned quite knows what it was, but the Centurion sauntered down to the Bosniak's tent. He had evidently conquered his cold. The next thing that was known was that the Corner Boy was seen taking the road for Constantinople. John says that he was not consulted in this affair. For once John spoke the truth.

The adventurers had barely got under canvas when the weather changed. Chill winds blew. This brought up rain and the cold suddenly became arctic in its severity. This

weather is to be expected in Thrace in early winter even as far south as Tchorlu. The snow and frost-steeped winds from the great Russian steppes sweep across the Black Sea and freeze Thrace tight. The weather, however, is rarely settled. To-day it may be arctic with feet of frozen snow, to-morrow the soft zephyrs from the Mediterranean may be sweeping up the Marmora and the snow melting in a heat equivalent to that of an English August.

Old soldiers have an adage to the effect that in winter the worst hut is better than the best tent. The adventurers began to feel this as the driving north wind swept up the slopes of their chill camping ground. There were certain amongst the correspondents who had essayed to make this campaign after the manner of the Spartans. They scorned both tent and bed. The cold, however, found the joint in their Spartan harness, and they joined in a request lodged with the Bosniak, that, if Tchorlu was to be a standing camp, the ad-

venturers at least might be allowed to take up winter quarters in the village.

It is now time to introduce the Popinjay. He was most remarkable for his independence and the excellence of his servant "Joe." Joe was the most expensive dragoman on the list of Pera knaves that batten on Western curiosity and ignorance. Joe is also the best servant to take into camp that any man could desire. He was eminently suited to the Popinjay, to whom expense was no object when balanced against personal comfort. The Popinjay, however, had that estimable quality of never being really happy and comfortable until he had a wisp of fellows round him to share his creature comforts. Joe had foreseen this cold and had fitted his master's tent with charcoal braziers in scientific profusion. The Popinjay was no niggard in his hospitality. During the cold snap this tent became the club house of the British section. Joe served cordials with lavish hand. His master smiled benignly, and lightened his guests'

pockets through the medium of a game called poker.

The necessity of rallying round the Popinjay's fire induced the British adventurers to bring pressure to bear upon the Bosniak to organise a move. There were other reasons besides the cold. The Tchorlu valley was fast becoming a gigantic concentration camp. Division after division seemed to be marching in. The rough bivouacs of the soldiers were creeping closer and closer to the area in which the adventurers were domiciled. The Anatolian Redif, estimable fellow though he doubtless is in many ways, is not an ideal neighbour in a sanitary sense. This fact was becoming alarmingly apparent to the adventurers, when suddenly the Bosniak sailed down upon them and informed them that they must hold themselves in readiness to strike camp at any moment as Abdullah Pasha had issued instructions that they were to go into standing camp in the village of Tchorlu.

Beyond a rather cryptic statement made offi-

cially by the Bosniak Shepherd to the effect that "the Turkish army of the offensive had found the advanced line of Adrianople—Kirk Kilisse—unsuitable for the concentration, and that it had, therefore, fallen back upon the line Baba Eski—Lule Burgas—Viza," no single word of direct information had been vouchsafed to the adventurers. A smattering of the facts, however, filtered through, and it was realised that Adrianople was already invested and that the Bulgarians and Turkish advance guards were in touch in front of both Lule Burgas and Bunar Hissar. As yet, however, the sounds of the guns were not audible at Tchorlu. The Centurion, who was now almost entirely recovered from his distemper, had set the sound of the guns as the signal at which it would be expedient to break away from the Shepherd's flock.

Turkish soldiers manœuvring near Adrianople

# CHAPTER IV

## STILL BLANK

THE village of Tchorlu, contrary to the usual run of Turkish hamlets, is built upon a hill, or rather upon the summit of one of the rolling downs which are the features of this portion of the Peninsula. It is a typical Turkish township, with its narrow streets, cobbled roadways and tumble-down, ramshackle, over-hanging houses. For a village, it is of considerable importance, as it taps the three main arteries and commercial roads leading from Adrianople to the Sea of Marmora. It is also a strategic point of considerable military value. In fact, it is understood that Marshal Von der Goltz, the military mentor of the Turkish army, favoured the position of Tchorlu as the most important in the whole Peninsula, Tchataldja included. Although the railway junctions further north covered by

Lule Burgas possibly produce a more artificial strategic value, yet on the merits of purely natural positions plus the possibilities they present of changing from the defensive to the offensive, the Tchorlu *terrain* has much to commend it. It was also a garrison town, and had been largely used for the purpose of the hurried mobilisation. It had been selected by Abdullah Pasha as the headquarters of the army in the field during the concentration.

The populace, like those of all Thracian townships, was of course mixed. Mingled with the true Turks were Armenians, Jews, Greeks and Bulgarians. It was, however, a prosperous place, and having received the mission to billet the adventurers in the town, the Bosniak Shepherd proceeded to find accommodation. In carrying out these duties, the Shepherd was perfectly sincere and hard-working. Of course, like other Turks, he had not the remotest idea of the nature or character of the accommodation that even the meanest European would require. When he entered

the town to find the billets, he had only two ideas fixed in his head. These were that all it was necessary to give a European was a roof and a bed, and that his two Russian adventurers must sleep under the same roof as himself. It was firmly embedded in the Tartar lining of his brain that the two Russian correspondents were Bulgarian spies. On one or two of the occasions when he had lapsed into confidences, he had been heard to remark that it would be an astounding thing if his Russian guests survived the vicissitudes of the campaign.

The Bosniak Shepherd found the billets for the British adventurers in the chief han in the village. As there may be many who have not had experience of a Turkish han, it will be as well to give some little description of these dingy hostels. The han is really a relic of the posting days. The serais or posting houses were always built as rectangular enclosures. The origin is quite obvious. In the old days the roads were infested with brigands and

footpads. Every caravan was armed, whilst each posting house of necessity had to be a fort. During the night the animals were stabled within the rectangle, whilst the grooms and attendants slept in little receptacles below the banquette of the walls. For travellers of better degree, special rooms were added. Custom or convenience had it that these rooms should be adjacent to the gates. Thus it was that the local architects came to place the guest-rooms above the gates. You will find that this custom survives throughout the East. You may go from Bosnia and Herzegovina right away through Persia and Central Asia until you finally finish in Manchuria, and you will find traces of this old system in most of the local post houses that you patronize.

Of such was the general design of the han in which the British group of adventurers were billeted. The landlord had perhaps half a dozen small cubical rooms on the landing above his entrance gate. Into each of these tiny bandboxes were squeezed two or three

iron framed beds. The beds were so close to each other that there was no space left for anything else in the rooms.

The landlord, a fat, slobbery Greek, received his new guests with every show of delight, and well he might, for a clientèle of fifteen or sixteen Englishmen meant wealth to him. The majority of the adventurers just looked at their rooms and at once decided that they would billet themselves. They refused to have anything to do with the filthy han, the beds of which were crawling with vermin, and went out with their dragomans to forage for shelter. A few remained in the han; amongst these was the Centurion, whose knowledge of Turkey dated back some years. He immediately organised his servants and without any reference to the landlord, threw each of the beds, mattresses and all, out of the window into the street. The oily smile died on the Greek patron's face. He essayed to stay the wreck of his beds and the dismantling of his room. The result of his ill-timed interference was

that he was gently dropped down the stairway. As soon as the existing furniture had been cleared from the room, the latter was washed down from ceiling to floor, sprinkled with disinfectant and then furnished with the Centurion's own camp furniture.

In the meantime, mine host had gone weeping to the Bosniak Shepherd. The ex-Deputy of the Turkish Chamber was conducted into the street to the spot where the Turkish soldiery had already begun to make away with the Greek's bedroom furniture. He looked at the wreckage on the ground, then up at the window. It is not often that the Turk will allow any expression betraying feeling to pervade his countenance. Never before had a Turkish officer been seen by the Centurion with such an expression of utter hopelessness as that worn by the Bosniak Shepherd, when he surveyed the wreckage. What he said to the Greek was overheard by John. In one expression he conveyed to the unlucky host that he was unable to cope with the eccentricities of

"No sooner did they arrive than they were marched hotfoot northwards in the direction of Lule Burgas." *See page 73*

his charges. His one sentence was: "These Englishmen are inexplicable."

It was no easy matter getting into the village of Tchorlu that morning; the entire valley between the town and the barracks had become one great camp. Battalion after battalion was met marching through the town. The majority of these troops belonged to Torgad Shevket's Second Army Corps, the last divisions of which were being hurried via Siliviri and Rodosto from the Dardanelles and Smyrna. They had no time to allow the mud of Tchorlu to cake on their boots, for no sooner did they arrive than they were marched hotfoot northwards in the direction of Lule Burgas. For the most part they were good-looking troops, Nizam battalions that had been stiffened with first class Redifs. They were not so underofficered as the units that had mustered in the Constantinople area. They had been mobilised for the Italian war.

They were, however, looking a trifle tired and travel-worn, and one would have liked

to have seen them halting for at least a day with the Redif battalions already in camp at Tchorlu. The Turkish arms, however, had need of its first line troops in the neighbourhood of Lule Burgas. How desperate was this need was not yet appreciated in the billets of the adventurers. It will be remembered that October 23rd had been the crucial day of the campaign at Kirk Kilisse. It was now October 28th. Although precise information was not yet available in Tchorlu by this date, two out of three divisions of the First Corps d'Armée, had been defeated by the Bulgarians just south of Kirk Kilisse and were in broken retreat upon Baba Eski.

Amongst the adventurers two groups had provided themselves with motor cars. The Centurion and the Diplomat shared one car, while the Dumpling and the two Jew's Harps were the proud possessors of another. It had been impossible to convey the cars by train and they perforce had to make the journey by road. For some reason, which has never been

clearly explained, the Chief Censor at Constantinople would not allow the cars to start until two days after the train had left. The doctors had advised Jew's Harp Senior to stay behind for a day or two, as he was hardly well enough to take the road.

The two cars arrived at Tchorlu the same day that the adventurers went into their town billets. The Centurion met his car in the street. To his astonishment, he found seated in it a cinematograph operator with all the heavy parts of his picture-catching machine piled about him. The Centurion was speechless. When he had issued his orders before leaving Constantinople, he had impressed upon his chauffeur that every available pound of weight that the car could carry over and above the driver was to be utilised for the carriage of petrol. He had realised that once they were with the army in the field, petrol would be to him of the same value as its measure in gold dust. It must be remembered that petrol is not a commodity to be found in every

Turkish village. It is probable that not more than a few spoonfuls could be bought between Stamboul and Adrianople. It was, therefore, essential that the car should leave its base loaded to the uttermost straw with the precious fluid. The Centurion, biting his lip, took the unlucky passenger to task. He said that he had only done what he had been told by his master who was a passenger in the other car. The cinematograph monger's master proved to be one of those free lance opportunists who invariably arrive at modern theatres of war in the guise of journalists to see what is to be made out of rollicking adventure. They are usually adept in living upon the country. Here was a case in point. The man who ran the cinematograph had so ingratiated himself with the Chief Censor in Constantinople that the latter had offered him, with his operator and material, space in the car of a man to whom every square inch was of vital importance. The Chief Censor is not to be blamed; he could hardly be expected to know much

about the requirements of journalistic enterprise, or he would never have sanctioned the cars at all. But what is one to say of the man who accepted the Censor's offer, and in so doing almost fatally handicapped a legitimate correspondent? His action went within an ace of wrecking the entire fabric of the Centurion's carefully worked out plans.

It had taken the cars exactly three days to reach Tchorlu from Stamboul. The distance is not much more than forty miles. The state of the roads they came through must be seen to be believed,—they came, it must be remembered, by the main Adrianople road, which is reputed to be the best in Turkey. The experiences were entirely desperate. In places bullocks had to be hired to haul the cars out of the mudholes into which they had fallen. Before the cold set in, the weather had been wet. The cars had started when this bad weather had just set in.

There was a considerable flutter in the British dovecots at Tchorlu, when it was found

that Jew's Harp Senior had not come up in his car. The cinematograph-master told a story which added to the general disquiet at the Jew's Harp's non-arrival, and fairly drove the Diplomat into a frenzy of alarm. It appears that Jew's Harp had started in his car in the company of a Turkish officer, who had been specially deputed to convey him to the billets of his colleagues. The second day out from Constantinople, Jew's Harp's car had stuck in the mire in a manner that seemed hopeless. Jew's Harp Senior, as his sobriquet suggests, is a man on wires. It so irked him to stand by while animal draught was employed to drag his conveyance out of the slough, that he suddenly struck off on foot followed by his officer bear-leader. He disappeared into the mists of night, just shouting back to the others to make the best of their way up to Tchorlu, as he was going to discover another and more rapid means of getting to the front.

The Diplomat would not believe a word of it. He argued that all his contentions were

correct, that the Jew's Harp had arranged special facilities and that already he had stolen a march on the rest of his colleagues and was away to the forefront of the battle. To some extent the Diplomat must have possessed the faculty of divination. It did befall that the Jew's Harp made his way to the fighting before the rest of the adventurers; but it did not fall out in the manner the Diplomat had imagined. There was no malice aforethought on the part of the Jew's Harp, but only a singular round of extraordinary good luck. But of this later. When by that evening, Jew's Harp Senior had not turned up at Tchorlu, his young brother became desperate in his anxiety for his safety. As a matter of history, Jew's Harp Senior did arrive at Tchorlu that evening, but he was clever enough, or fortunate enough, to maintain his detachment from his other colleagues.

The general anxiety and unrest amongst the British section of the adventurers at Tchorlu that afternoon, was raised almost to breaking-

point by the sound of a distant cannonade brought down along the frosty wind that had now set in from the north. For the last three days there had been champing at the bits. All the indications from the north showed that the great happenings were increasing and coming nearer. Wounded could be seen at the railway station. The great camp of Redifs in the Tchorlu Valley had broken up, and those half trained troops had followed in the footsteps of the battalions of Torgad Shevket. The Bosniak Shepherd, however, shrugged his shoulders, and said he had received no orders and that Abdullah Pasha, the generalissimo, was still at Tchorlu.

The Centurion had now fully recovered his health. It is probable that, had he not been so demobilised by the grippe, he would have taken an independent line before this. As it was, now the car had arrived, the whole of his own communications system was complete, and the afternoon that the guns were first heard, he called for his horse and started upon

a personal reconnoissance. He slipped out of the village of Tchorlu by a back street, and fetching a compass so as to avoid any examining posts in the vicinity of the railway station, struck the Lule Burgas road two miles north of Tchorlu. Once he was out on the open down, the distant roar of the cannon was more audible than it had been in the village. Without a shadow of doubt the great battle that was to decide the history of the Turks in Europe was already begun.

It was evident to a practised ear that the encounter was at least twenty-five miles away. The Centurion rode on from ridge to ridge for about ten miles, always hoping that the next eminence would produce some feature from which he could draw a definite conclusion. As he rode further, however, the sound of the firing seemed to grow but little louder. One thing was certain and that was that the tide of battle for the moment was stationary, for every movement that passed him on the Lule Burgas road was trending northwards.

Save for one or two convoys of empties there was nothing coming back. The fact that the empties were not even utilised for the transport of wounded proved that the battle, such as it was, or wherever it was, was still in its infancy. With his knowledge of modern war, the Centurion felt that it was not necessary to sever his connection with his base that self-same night. Modern battles of the proportions of this great struggle in Thrace are not decided within the narrow limits of sun-up and sunset on a short winter's day.

On returning to Tchorlu, the Centurion found that he, with the others of the leading British adventurers, was invited out to dinner by "The General." Hitherto the General has not been introduced. He was an adventurer of many years' experience. At this campaign, he was mainly noticeable by reason of the weirdness of his dress. To all intents and purposes, he looked like a British officer under perpetual arrest. He wore a British Service uniform of correct design, but devoid of all

"Save for one or two convoys of empties there was nothing coming back. The fact that the empties were not even utilised for the transport of wounded proved that the battle, such as it was, or wherever it was, was still in its infancy"

distinguishing marks, so that at first sight, he conjured up the picture of the arrested officer shorn of sword and spurs. Being an old campaigner, he knew how to make himself comfortable, and on arrival at Tchorlu, he refused to have anything to do with the hospitality of the han, and proceeded to instal himself in a well-proportioned, and moderately clean Armenian house that his servant found unoccupied.

On this particular night he invited the more intimate of his colleagues to dine with him. It was an interesting dinner. With the exception of the brothers Jew's Harp, all the British adventurers who have hitherto been mentioned in this narrative were present at his hospitable board. As a matter of fact, this was the last occasion on which the British adventurers accredited to the Turkish Army were all gathered together in one place. Before the dinner, the Centurion and the Diplomat, as partners in the motor car, had made a plan to break away from the control of the Bosniak

Shepherd in the small hours of the following morning. The Dumpling, who, now that Jew's Harp Senior could not be found, was sole owner in their joint car, had also made his arrangements to leave the fold. The majority of the others had done likewise, yet since secretiveness was the essence of success in each of the contemplated manœuvres, none of the adventurers wished his colleagues to know that any change in procedure was in contemplation. The entire company at the dinner, therefore, dissembled throughout the meal. The Centurion spoke as to what they would be able to do in Tchorlu on the morrow. The Diplomat, who was a raconteur of more than ordinary merit, kept the company in roars of laughter with his droll stories. First one then another had suggestions which were intended to disguise the various projects for the morrow. There was only one note that seemed to ring untrue. When the Diplomat's stories began to flag, and others of the guests showed symptoms of disquiet bred of subdued excitement, the General suggested that the

table should be cleared for the usual game of poker. To his surprise, not one of the company felt inclined to play poker. One had a mail message to write; another was beastly tired; a third wanted to go round and see the Censor; in fact, everyone had some excuse with which to cover up the real design at the back of each man's mind, which was to get as much sleep as possible before slipping away in the early hours.

As the several British adventurers are dismissed to their homes to make the final preparations for their early start on the following morning, it would be just as well to introduce Hamdi. Hamdi is a great fat boy of an Egyptian and is the Centurion's chauffeur. He came to Turkey in the employ of Prince Aziz Pasha, the unsuccessful commander of the second division of the First Army Corps. Why Hamdi left the prince's employ is not part of this story. He became the joint servant of the Diplomat and the Centurion for the purposes of the campaign. Without exaggeration, Hamdi is the stoutest and most skilful

driver of a car over a difficult country that ever sat behind a steering-wheel. It requires a man of iron nerve and responsive skill to steer a car over Thracian roads. Hamdi had only one fault, which was a very serious one when he was associated with men of the type of the Centurion. He was a great talker, and besides having wonderful powers of narration, had a great memory for detail. Hamdi had instructions to have the car ready for the road between five and six on the following morning. A careful calculation showed that he had just sufficient petrol to take the car to Lule Burgas, bring it back to Tchorlu and then make the journey to one of the Marmora ports for the purpose of replenishing the supply. To enable this to be done, the greatest economy would have to be effected in the expenditure of the spirit. The story of how closely the husbanding of this source of mobility was to affect the business that the two interested adventurers had in hand, must be left to another chapter.

## CHAPTER V

### FOR'ARD AWAY

THEY sell in Vienna for twenty-five francs a little pocket *reveillé* watch which is the best value in the way of timepieces for the money, in which anyone connected with war's alarms can invest. At 4:30, the chime of his pocket watch burred under the Centurion's pillow. Almost to the minute, a fainter chime from elsewhere told him that another of the adventurers was likewise an early riser. This was the Dumpling, who, finding the Centurion waking, took him into his confidence.

"Having heard nothing of my partner in the car, I shall have to move on my own to-day. I don't mind telling you that I am pulling out from this gang, because I know that you will play the game by me, and besides, in case of accidents, I should like someone of the crowd

to know where I have gone. The truth of the matter is I am short of petrol. My partner in the enterprise brought up all these amateur trimmings when he should have loaded up with a dead weight of spirit. I find that I have only just enough to take me down to Rodosto. If I cannot find petrol there, I am done, but I know, old chap, you will see me out if anything big happens, or if I get into difficulties. What I propose to do, is to slip down to the coast, get what petrol there is in the town, and if things work out properly, I want to be back again at the front inside of three or four hours."

The Centurion promised to play the game by his companion. There is a great bond of loyalty between the professional adventurers. If it were not so, it would often be impossible for them to carry out their enterprises. The Dumpling crept out of the room, so as not to disturb the other adventurers sleeping in the han, while the Centurion wished him luck.

As soon as he was dressed, it was the Cen-

turion's business to see that Hamdi had the car in running order. Everything had been prepared over night and the game Hamdi was at his post. He pointed out a rather serious difficulty. One of the petrol tanks had been damaged during the rough journey up. Now that it was filled with the last supply of petrol, it showed signs of leakage. Every drop of the spirit was of vital importance and an effort was made to calk the leak. A quarter of an hour before the appointed time of the start, the Diplomat, who was billeted elsewhere, arrived girded for the fray. He was a great boy, the Diplomat, and as he walked into the dimly lighted yard of the han, he reminded his companion of those peony cheeked yeomanry officers of the South African war who arrived in Cape Town, hung from head to foot with that superfluity of leather trappings which the wholesale outfitter in London maintains to be the necessary equipment of the man proceeding to a battlefield.

The great John was also in evidence. To

him had been assigned another rôle. It was his business to take out two horses which were to meet the car at a certain place in the vicinity of Lule Burgas towards midday. The dashing Armenian, who relished the importance of being trusted with a special commission, assured his master that only death would prevent him from appearing at the tryst at the appointed hour.

One last look round the car, a trial run of the engine, and then the two adventurers took their seats in the car, which backed slowly out into the cobbled streetway. It was still dark, in fact it was thought there would not be sufficient light to follow the Adrianople road until close upon seven o'clock. The road, however, from Tchorlu village down to the station was perfectly good for passage in the dark. It was argued also by the Centurion that with the powerful headlights burning, the car would establish a moral superiority over any examining post or picket outside the town and station. Under cover of night it would

be believed by the ordinary Turkish regimental officer, if there was one on duty, that the car was taking officers of the General Staff to the front. On the preceding day, the wind had set in the north, and during the night there had been a heavy frost. This was almost providential, as much of the vaunted Adrianople road—which is marked on the maps as metalled throughout—is simply maize fields. When the crust of these is frozen tight, the going is excellent.

It was up and out of Tchorlu village without let or hindrance. As the surmise had been, the pickets and examining posts stepped back to let the car race past. By the time that the railway station was reached, a dim visibility appeared in the morning sky indicating that it would soon be light. At the first hill outside the military encampment proper, the great-coated pickets showed clear against the fast disclosing horizon, and the men turned inwards at the unexpected noise of the approaching automobile. It was, however, none of

their business to interfere with so fearsome an object, that seemed to look through them with its great acetylene eyes, and by the time that it was light enough to see the road, the Centurion and his companion were clear of all the pitfalls that might conceivably have upset their carefully calculated plans. It was now light.

The first thing that forced itself upon their attention was the abrupt vanishing of the metalled road. Up and over an old and steep Turkish bridge, the metal came to an end. Just as if it had been pruned off with a knife, the work of the engineers ceased. For the rest of the way there was a mere track, furrowed into deep ruts by the passing of guns and heavy transport, but at the moment frozen hard and easily negotiable.

It is difficult to describe the sense of elation which seized upon the feelings of the two adventurers, as they realised that they were at last free of the trammels of the Bosniak's soulless officialism. It was exactly eight days

since the train had carried them from Stamboul. These eight days had been crowded with excitements, disappointments and innumerable heartburnings. During the last twenty-four hours the situation had become almost unbearable, for the gall of their thraldom in that stinking Turkish village had been made more poignant by the distant rumbling of the guns. Now all that was over and the two men had their heads turned in the right direction.

The country they were crossing was the expanse of rolling downland which the Centurion had reconnoitred on the previous afternoon. It was a wonderful *terrain*—miles and miles of gently undulating downland, one low-lying ridge succeeding another with regular monotony. It was almost devoid of habitation and practically treeless. In places low down in the valleys, at long intervals, occasional villages and plantations forced themselves upon the landscape, but they were so small and modest in comparison to the gi-

gantic sweep of the uplands, that these human habitations were overshadowed in the gorgeous vastness of the natural waste.

From a military point of view, it appeared to the Centurion to be the most magnificent country in which to conduct operations on a grand scale that Providence in its wisdom had ever fashioned. From ridge top to ridge top it was generally a matter of a couple of thousand yards, whilst there was nothing in the gradients to break the hearts of galloping gun teams or quickly moving infantry. As a cavalry country it was superb, and as the Centurion leaned back on the cushions of his car he wondered to himself what the greatest cavalry leader of the day would think, if, in such a country, he were given the present opportunity and a division. It was an expanse of negotiable waste, such as the true cavalryman sees in his dreams but rarely in the finished works of nature.

The Centurion felt confident that they had not lost much by the last two days of enforced

inactivity in Tchorlu. The Diplomat, who was taking the field for the first time and who was less versed in the proportion of military affairs, was not so sanguine. As events were to prove, matters had marched in this great battle of Lule Burgas more rapidly than the Centurion had calculated, more rapidly indeed than anyone had anticipated. In reality the outline of the situation justified his optimism. The Turks having had the original plans for their concentration put out of gear by the unfortunate disaster at Kirk Kilisse, had intended to rectify this failure by establishing a semi-defensive front from Viza on the right to Baba Eski on the left. It was to this purpose that Turgad Shevket's units of the Second Corps had been pushed mercilessly through Tchorlu, and the two divisions of Redifs, once concentrated round the adventurers' original encampment, had been pressed forward to the line of battle.

According to the information that was believed by Abdullah Pasha's staff, the Bulga-

rians had made their invasion of Thrace in three columns. These three columns had practically concentrated in the territory they had violated, on the same line as it had been the intention of the Turks to establish their advance alignment. After Kirk Kilisse, it was understood at Turkish Headquarters that one of the columns had been detached to furnish an initial investment of the Adrianople fortress, whilst the other two advanced south on almost parallel routes. The Turks, for some reason, believed that the right Bulgarian column would move south upon Baba Eski. The actions fought at Yenidje and Kavakla against the first (Constantinople) division, doubtless gave colour to this impression. It was, therefore, the Turkish intention that Mahmud Muktear with the Third Corps should deal so heavily with the left Bulgarian column as it advanced down the Bunar Hissar-Viza road, that even if he did not defeat it, he might so detain it that the Fourth Turkish Corps, supported by the Second, pushing up

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"They had overtaken one or two ammunition columns toiling northwards." *See page 97*

from Lule Burgas, could divide the invaders' strength. The Bulgarians, however, although they took a very considerable risk in the line of their advance south from Kirk Kilisse, had no intention of committing the extreme folly of following the Baba Eski road any further than had been necessary to enable them to defeat the echeloned divisions of the First Turkish Corps.

It was not until the car had passed about a third of the distance between Tchorlu and Lule Burgas that the adventurers found any direct evidences of the battle. They had overtaken one or two ammunition columns toiling northwards. They had passed also a kind of communication rest camp that had been pitched by a drinking fountain. When, however, the car was toiling up the rise which overlooks Muradli a considerable body of men was seen to be marching southwards.

"Good God!" said the Centurion, "that looks like a retreat."

A close scrutiny, however, showed that the

men were for the most part wounded. It was a large convoy of slightly wounded who had left the front on the preceding day. The majority of the men had shrapnel wounds in the head and arms. An Armenian hospital assistant when interrogated volunteered the information that "These are not all shrapnel wounds. Do you notice how many men are wounded in the left hand. We have every reason to suspect that these wounds are self-inflicted."

This doubtless was the case, as throughout the war, the Turkish authorities had been much troubled by faint-hearted soldiers placing themselves *hors de combat* in this manner.

There are few sights in this world as pathetic as a column of wounded returning directly from the battlefield. It is moving enough to see suffering in the accident wards of a great hospital. Here, however, after science has come to relieve the suffering, the tender hands of the nursing staff have generally obliterated the more pronounced indi-

"In the bitter cold of that bleak winter's morning it was a fearful sight to see these wretched victims of international hate and greed, plodding their weary, painful and hungry way back to the railway." *See page 99*

cations of the grisly hurts. The unfortunates who leave the dressing stations on the battlefield, however, have little to relieve their suffering or to disguise the hideous wounds which have been their fate.

In the best organised army this is so, but in the Turkish army the sights were even more heartrending. In the first place the first field dressing was generally inadequate, and in the second, the Turkish medical officer's estimate of a walking case is totally different to that of his western colleagues. In the bitter cold of that bleak winter's morning it was a fearful sight to see these wretched victims of international hate and greed, plodding their weary, painful and hungry way back to the railway. Behind the column of toiling foot patients, came a string of springless wagons. Here the adventurers found lying-down cases. The condition of the poor fellows in the wagons was terrible. They were heaped upon each other so that the bloody rags that were meant as dressings seemed to be doing double duty to

the gaping wounds. Some of the men had great-coats, the blood soiled tunics of others were frozen stiff as boards. The acute agony which each was suffering was writ large upon their drawn and livid features. When out of the *débris* of what had been half a dozen men a reeking face pushed itself above the side of the cart—a great bloody socket where once there had been an eye—and the swollen lips imploring mercy, the Centurion could stand it no longer. He told Hamdi to restart the engine.

The car was scarcely clear of the sick convoy when it ran into another concourse of men. The first impression was that this was a further column of slightly wounded. To the Centurion's astonishment, however, the gangs of uniformed men they were meeting were all robust and strong. It was a great rabble of soldiers, many of whom were without firearms. The men were totally disorganised and were making their way south without any attempt at military formation.

"It was a great rabble of soldiers, many of whom were without firearms. The men were totally disorganised and were making their way south without any attempt at military formation"

The Centurion was now all attention. He turned to the Diplomat and said anxiously: "Heavens! it looks as if the whole army is in retreat. This is a broken force."

The men certainly looked as if they belonged to a routed army. They were haggard, hunger-wasted and travel-stained. Their uniforms were filthy and their legs were mired up to the knees. They all regarded the car with furtive apprehension as if they expected it to contain some grim-tongued Pasha who would rally them and send them back to the Hades of shot and shell they were deserting.

The Centurion was totally nonplussed, because whilst these men in their hundreds were drifting southwards, disciplined bodies of troops and organised transport columns were dividing the route with them as they marched hotfoot in the opposite direction.

The adventurers saluted the commandant of a north-going battalion and finding him amicably disposed drew him into conversation. The Centurion asked him the reason of this

extraordinary rearward trend. The Bey shrugged his shoulders as he answered: "These are the men of Nazir Pasha's Division. They have been defeated and they don't want to fight any more." The Bey gave this insight into the obvious as if it was a sufficient reason for his own indifference.

"But," said the Centurion vehemently, all of the soldier in him concentrated in the question, "but, surely you are not going to let them go walking away like this? Why don't you stop them yourself and collect them with your own battalion?"

The Bey answered smilingly, "It is none of my business. They belong to another division, and, besides, I have orders to come quickly to Karisdiran." He seemed to look at the whole of this terrible business as a matter of course.

"Is the whole army coming back like this?" asked the Centurion.

"Oh, no!" answered the Bey, "this is only the First Stamboul Army Corps, which was so

badly beaten at Yenidje. This has nothing to do with the Fourth Army Corps and the Second, which are fighting strongly at Lule Burgas. I am on my way to help them."

The Centurion let himself fall back on the cushions of the car. As it seemed to him the whole thing was inexplicable. One half of the Turkish army refused responsibility for either the failure or success of the other. Saluting the Bey, who waved an affable farewell, the adventurers pushed forward. They had now covered about half the distance to Lule Burgas. As the sun rose the going began to get difficult, so that the car could hardly make more than eight miles an hour. Not only was the road bad but the route was thronged with transport wagons, wounded, and this continued stream of craven casuals returning from the battlefield.

By this time the Centurion was really becoming anxious, especially since, up to the present, there had been an ominous silence on the part of the artillery. No sound of guns

broke the stillness of the morning air. It certainly looked as if the battle was over and that he and the Diplomat were too late for the fair. His sudden pessimism, however, was somewhat dissipated by the optimism of a youthful staff officer whom they met on his way to the rear.

"Battle over?" he said. "Why, it is only just beginning. The reason why you have not heard the guns firing this morning is easily explained. The gunners on both sides are waiting for these heavy mists to clear. How is the battle going? It is going very well for Turkey. I am going back with a message to Seidler to bring up the head of one of the divisions of the Seventeenth Corps. Yes! There has been heavy fighting all about Lule Burgas; in fact, Lule Burgas is neither in our possession nor in that of the Bulgarians. Owing to their artillery positions we had to vacate the village of Lule Burgas. We shall, however, retake it to-night, and you have heard no doubt that the battle is going magnificently for us on

the Viza side. Yesterday the Bulgarians fell back in front of Mahmud Muktear and the Pasha has now taken Bunar Hissar."

The Centurion then asked this youth where they should find Abdullah Pasha and the directing staff.

"I left His Excellency at Amurdza, which is close to the village of Sakiskuey. That is where he has made his headquarters. That is where you will find him."

With a cheery nod and wave of his hand this light-hearted popinjay cantered down the slopes towards Seidler, firm in his optimistic belief that the victorious march of the Crescent to Sofia had really begun. The Centurion did not know how much of his story to believe. One part of it, however, received almost immediate confirmation. They had barely restarted the car after this conversation when the guns began to boom. It was almost as if a match had been put to the whole line. The sound of the firing seemed to break out simultaneously along the whole front. As the

adventurers were now within ten miles of the Lule Burgas front the roar of the cannon in this neighbourhood was heavy, and it was possible between the lulls of the firing to hear the fainter reverberation of the battle taking place in the direction of Viza. These sounds of war greatly cheered the Centurion and his partner. It was certain from these evidences of battle in their ears, that in spite of the continuous rearward trend of casuals, the Turks were still holding their own. The car was now passing the village of Karisdiran, which seemed to be the position chosen for the General Reserve. At least a Division was halted in the valley.

Leaving the village on the right the adventurers took the direct road to Lule Burgas. They had to negotiate one of the arms of the Ergene River. It was bridged with an ancient Turkish bridge, but the approach to this could only be made by way of an ancient causeway. The surface of this causeway was faced with worn stone flags. If any owner of a garage in Paris or London had been asked if it

were possible to take a car along that viaduct, the writer is positive that his answer would have been in the negative. Hamdi also had his doubts and was obliged to go forward on foot to reconnoitre. It looked very much as if the adventurers would have to leave the car at this fearsome relic of ancient engineering and make their way to the battlefield on foot. Hamdi took nearly a quarter of an hour to complete his reconnoissance. He stopped at places and shook his head, and then worked laboriously to cast stones out of the path. Finally he sauntered back to the car and with a pessimistic shake of his head murmured: "Can go." Hamdi was like the Chinaman. When he said "Can go," he meant that he would try his best. In all conscience Hamdi's best when he was driving the car along the saw-tooth surface and the precipitous edge of the causeway was a hair-raising experience. How he ever managed to get that car across will remain a mystery to the Centurion to his dying day. Not only did Hamdi get the car

across, but later in the day he brought it back by the same route. Both times when he had accomplished the feat the perspiration was running down the Centurion's cheeks from sheer excitement at the thrills of the passage. This causeway was the last serious obstacle. From here onwards the road mended and the car began to eat up the few remaining miles that separated the adventurers from the stirring scenes of battle.

They also found on this section of the road the first evidences of an effort being made to induce some of the absentees from the firing line to return to their duty. The mounted gendarmes had evidently received orders to stop the systematic percolation of the fighting strength. Turkish methods of persuasion with their own people are rough. There was no doubt that the occasion called for rough treatment. The mounted gendarmes, some with whips, some with naked sabres, were just driving the malingerers back to their duties. It did the Centurion's heart good to see the

way the gendarmes went about their work, also it was edifying to realise that the Turkish soldier dreaded the gendarmes' whips more than he feared the Bulgarian shrapnel.

The adventurers spoke to one of the gendarmes and discovered from him that they belonged to the Second Army Corps. They had received their orders from Turgad Shevket Pasha to bring every straggler back to the front, irrespective of the corps to which he might belong. According to this gendarme, whose conversation was interpreted by Hamdi, matters had become rather serious on the previous day in the vicinity of Lule Burgas. In fact there had been a somewhat similar stampede to that which had taken place at Kirk Kilisse. Luckily, a division of the Second Corps which was moving up into its position on the right of the Fourth Corps, was near at hand to steady matters. What was more fortunate was that Torgad Shevket was with this division. As he is one of the few officers exercising high command in the Turk-

ish Army who is equal to the responsibilities of his office, he was able to do much to re-establish the Turkish defensive. Nor was Ahmed Abouk, the Commander of the Fourth Corps, foolish enough to resent Torgad Shevket's level-headed usurpation of authority. The backwash of his energetic control was found in the gentle means of persuasion which his mounted gendarmes were dealing out to the malingerers.

## CHAPTER VI

### FULL CRY

THE car climbed to the top of a steep rise and the whole panorama lay in front of the adventurers. "Thank God! we have got here," was the remark of the Centurion. He told Hamdi to stop the car and jumped out to examine the petrol tank. The Centurion realised that the thing next in importance to arriving at the battle was getting away from it. In this case it was a question of petrol. The road had been far heavier than either he or Hamdi had expected, and he feared that the consumption of spirit had defeated all their calculations. While the Diplomat was entranced with the spectacle of bursting shrapnel, the Centurion was down on his hands and knees measuring the balance in the petrol tanks. Working the calculation out roughly, it seemed that there was just enough spirit to

take the car back to Tchorlu and then complete the journey to the sea coast. When the extra consumption that the state of the roads had necessitated was considered, it looked as if it would be a near thing. The Centurion decided, however, that there was just enough spirit, only it would not be safe to take the car another yard further away from the base.

It is difficult to describe in any detail a modern battle. If the spectator takes up a position which gives him a comprehensive view of the operations, all he can hope to do is to gain what may be called a telescopic impression of the fighting. If, however, he joins himself to some small unit and participates in the actual hurly burly of the fray, he misses the true perspective of the fight and is only able to discourse upon the tiny fraction in which he himself assisted.

The battle of Lule Burgas covered a front of at least thirty miles. Along this front there were two main salients. One was before Lule Burgas, the other twenty miles away in the

environment of Bunar Hissar. The position to which chance had brought the adventurers' car gave the occupants an admirable opportunity of viewing the operations along the salient of Lule Burgas. A long and detailed description of the battle would be tedious. Let it suffice to say that on that particular morning, the Bulgarians were battling to drive the Turks out of the wonderful position they held just southeast of Lule Burgas village. The Ottoman army had the possession of one of those long interminable downland ridges, which in this country often stretch with hardly a break sometimes for thirty miles. The left of the Turkish position was where this wonderful ridge fell away rapidly to give passage to the Ergene River. Here also the railway line bridged the valley to permit the permanent way to turn due west to Baba Eski and Dimotika. This wonderful ridge did not stand out as a single feature. It was one of the first and most pronounced of the many sweeping southwest all down the Tchataldja

Peninsula, with the monotonous regularity already described. It was the first step in the wavelike conformation which renders southern Thrace unique in the battlefields of the world.

Until he had been compromised by the fugitives from the First Army Corps, Ahmed Abouk had disposed his Fourth Army Corps to the north of the vineyards of Lule Burgas. Suddenly finding himself overwhelmed by the broken cohorts of the Constantinople Army Corps that came falling back upon him in hurried rout at the same moment that the Bulgarian left column suddenly came into action from the Ajvali ridges, Ahmed Abouk had found it imperative to evacuate Lule Burgas. This evacuation had been rendered precipitate by a night scare, for which the refugees from Omar Taver's army corps were mainly responsible. The Fourth Army Corps, after its retirement was disposed along the southwest end of the Amurdza range, whilst the Second Corps, which was only partially concentrated,

A wounded mounted Turkish officer leaving the field during the battle of Lule Burgas on October 30. The Turkish infantry can be seen across the river answering the fire of the Bulgarians on the crest of the hill in the background

was marched to the right flank to prolong the line.

All this had happened in the forty-six hours preceding the morning on which the adventurers arrived at the battlefield. There had been heavy fighting to the north of Lule Burgas. The wounded whom the adventurers had seen that morning, were just a few of the more fortunate who had escaped from that stricken field. The majority of the Turkish wounded had been abandoned where they fell, and if still alive, were dependent upon the mercy of the enemy.

There was no natural weakness in the new position in which the Ottoman army found itself, but the decision to occupy had been forced so suddenly upon the troops, that the infantry had practically had no time to use the spade.

The unfortunate stampede from Lule Burgas village had resulted in a very considerable quantity of the artillery ammunition remaining in that Tom Tiddler's ground.

If the administration of the rearward services of these two Turkish armies had been even moderately efficient, there was not the slightest reason why the Bulgarians, with the force with which they attacked, should ever have made headway. The Turk, however, left to himself, has not sufficient administrative faculty to work a windmill. His armies, therefore, if they were to defeat their enemy, would literally have to live on air.

It was about ten o'clock in the morning that the Bulgarian artillery really seemed to get down to its business of shelling the positions held by the Turkish Fourth Corps. They first developed a heavy attack upon the railway bridge on the extreme left of the Turkish position. On the right bank of the Ergene River, the Lule Burgas plantations come right down to the shelving banks. The Bulgarian infantry, although the Turkish guns forbade them Lule Burgas village proper, had been able to work down to the river's edge and to bring both rifle and ma-

chine-gun fire upon the bridge-head guards. This fire was too much for the guards on the right bank, and the adventurers suddenly saw the little men jump out of their trenches and hustle back across the bridge. The Bulgarians appeared to have been waiting for this and the burst of infantry fire that announced the Turkish movement showed that they were attempting to turn this flank in force. As the burst of firing subsided, the gunners of the Turkish battery that was nearest to the car suddenly swung round the gun trails and opened a rapid fire upon the vacated bridge head. It was a quick piece of work and the distance being under 3,000 yards, the range was effective. It could then be seen that the Bulgarians, to about the strength of a battalion, were attempting to force the passage of the river. They had not, however, counted upon the Turkish bridge guards on the left bank. Here was a long line of concealed trenches. These began to spit fire and in one five minutes of murderous mechanical

energy, the Bulgarian attempt had failed.

The divisional commander on the extreme left, however, was becoming anxious for this front, and without delay he withdrew a battalion from his reserve and marched it across his rear to support the company that held a hillock overhanging the river. It was a movement that might have been made with some haste. Turkish infantry, however, seems incapable of haste. The men saunter in and out of battle, be it victory, be it defeat, in much the same lethargic way as they saunter through their simple lives. Although the reinforced battalion seemed to be moving under sufficient cover, yet the Bulgarian gunners either guessed at the movement taking place or were apprised of it by some clever forward scouting, for they suddenly began to burst their shrapnel most opportunely above the heads of this moving unit. The Turkish soldiers took the punishment philosophically. They opened out just a little; that is, they shook out from their usual loose formation a

"They had not, however, counted upon the Turkish bridge guards on the left bank. Here was a long line of concealed trenches. These began to spit fire, and in one five minutes of murderous mechanical energy, the Bulgarian attempt had failed"

CALIFORNIA

trifle more freely and plodded slowly on. A man or two was hit by the shrapnel; nobody seemed to care. The wounded men sat down where they had been struck and nursed their hurts; no one stepped aside to look after them.

Whether it was the unexpected and vicious outburst on the part of the Turkish battery that surprised the Bulgarians or whether it was the sustained fire from the trenches in front of them and the failure of their first attempt to rush the position of the river is not certain, but they seemed suddenly to give up all effort to make ground on this particular front.

Matters, however, were warming up towards the centre of the Turkish left. Here Ahmed Abouk's infantry were lining an underfeature to the main ridge. The Bulgarian gunners had found these trenches and were searching them with concentrated fire from nearly twenty batteries. Much has been written concerning the superiority of the French guns, with which the Bulgarian Army

is supplied. A great deal of this is wild writing inspired by the sentimental feeling that French war material is superior to that of Germany. The Centurion who watched the artillery practice closely, formed no such high opinion of the Schneider-Canet field pieces, as demonstrated by the practice which the Bulgarian gunners made with them at the battle of Lule Burgas. Instead of pushing their batteries up to ranges from which it should have been possible to turn their enemy out of its cover, they were content with the practice they could make at distances which were often barely effective. Nor did they seem to fuze their shrapnel with a true gunner's instinct; they only seemed to burst it low by accident. They must have fired at the battle of Lule Burgas hundreds of rounds that burst so high that the result was purely innocuous. It must not be thought from this that the Turkish artillery fire was superior to that of the Bulgarians. The service of the Turkish batteries, generally speaking, was not so bad.

Their chief trouble seemed to lie in the defective ammunition and inability to protect their batteries from falling into the hands of the enemy.

By midday it looked as if the Turks were perfectly safe in their positions and that there was no chance of the Bulgarians making good at any point along the line. The Bulgarian positions were established in a series of low ridges which ran parallel to that on which the Turks were lying. The Bulgarians had the advantage of a certain amount of visual cover given to them by plantations. Their front, following more or less the line of the Karagarch rivulet, had the advantage of one or two villages that clung to the banks of that stream, whilst their left was firmly ensconced in the hamlet of Turk Bej. For the most part the firing lines were separated by nearly two thousand yards.

All through the morning, except for the incident on the Turkish extreme left, the battle had been confined to fire tactics. At cer-

tain places there had been attempts to occupy positions a little closer to the hostile line. Such movements as these drew perfect tornadoes of rifle fire. There was not, however, any indication that either side contemplated decisive movement.

The Diplomat, who had come to his first battle full of the stories of fighting conjured up to the youthful mind by such experts as Fenimore Cooper and Henty, was not backward in giving expression to his bitter disappointment on the non-realisation of all his youthful hopes. In fact, he became so bored at the monotony of the modern battlefield, that he stretched himself out on a rug beside the car and went off comfortably to sleep, invoking the Centurion to wake him if anything really interesting should occur. The Centurion also insisted that Hamdi should sleep, for he realised that the next twenty-four hours might see a fearful strain placed upon the endurance of the driver of the car.

The Centurion walked up and down look-

ing anxiously to his rear for the appearance of John with the horses. For the reasons of economy in spirit already mentioned, it was essential that the horses should arrive in time to enable the adventurers to visit the various headquarters of the nearest units to learn first hand from the Corps and Division commanders, the exact progress the operations were making. It was now past midday and yet there was no sign of John and the horses.

As the Diplomat and Hamdi were sleeping, side by side, the dead sleep of youth exhausted by excitement, the Centurion hired a gendarme to keep watch over them and the car, while he made a personal reconnoissance in the hope of finding someone in authority. After half an hour's trudge, he was fortunate enough to stumble across an officer of Ahmed Abouk's staff, whose confidence he had gained, when they had soldiered together in Albania. The staff officer was frankly optimistic. He stated that their only trouble was that most of their stores had been pushed up

towards Kirk Kilisse before they themselves had gone forward; that owing to the disaster to the Constantinople corps, they had lost all their supplies and it was not now a question of whether their men could fight, it was, rather, a question of whether they could be fed or whether they must starve as they lay in their positions. He confirmed the information that Mahmud Muktear was having a big success against the Bulgarian left. He stated that his general's information was to the effect that the Bulgarians had practically fought themselves to a standstill and that now that the Turkish right was moving forward, it was the intention of this army on the left to make a desperate effort this very afternoon to roll up the enemy in front of them. He admitted that Torgad Shevket Pasha had practically usurped the chief command from Abdullah Pasha, and had unofficially in the name of the latter, organised the whole of the present resistance.

The plan was as follows: In about an

Abdullah Pasha, nominally in command at Lule Burgas

CAMBRIDGE
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hour's time the centre division of the Fourth Army Corps was to be retired. This was to draw the concentrated fire of the Bulgarians towards the left of the Turkish position and if possible to induce them to attempt a forward movement. Simultaneously the two divisions of Torgad Shevket Pasha's corps that were between Karajatch and Sakiskuey, were to be thrown in upon the Bulgarian left holding Turk Bej. The little staff officer was confident that such a counter attack must carry all before it. "You will see the greatest battle of the war to-day and a great Turkish victory," he said cheerfully, as he galloped away to deliver some message.

It was between two and three in the afternoon when the centre division of Ahmed Abouk's corps began to retire from its forward position in front of Amurdza. The first movement of the infantry was heralded by a crash of artillery fire. The Bulgarian gunners had evidently been expecting some change in position, either forward or back-

wards on this front. As the Turkish infantry got up slowly out of their trenches and trooped back to the rear with dignified deliberation, salvos of shrapnel burst above their heads. The whole firmament seemed to be turned into a Hades by the whip-like crackling of this devilish instrument of war. Let the Bulgarian gunners burst their shrapnel never so rapidly, never so accurately, they were unable to make those Turkish troops move one pulse more quickly than if their retirement was a parade operation.

Then on the far right from the direction of Turk Bej arose another tumult. The head of Torgad Shevket's counter attack had risen out of the trenches. The Second Army Corps was making its supreme effort. Down the slope came the brown infantry in rapidly moving lines. Of a truth the Turks had taken the offensive. It was a wonderful spectacle and for the moment it looked as if the succession of waves must be irresistible. On and on they came like a swarm of bees leaving a

"As the Turkish infantry got up slowly out of their trenches and trooped back to the rear with dignified deliberation, salvos of shrapnel burst above their heads "

disturbed hive. Then suddenly from in front of them came a crash of fire, the like of which the Centurion had not heard since his Manchurian days. It was as if a million rifles were firing as one. The shrapnel from overhead was nothing in comparison to this. It seemed as if the whole line of advancing Turks shuddered under the shock. There was no period to the crash; it was but the prelude to a sustained series that demonstrated to the utmost the devastating power of the modern firearm. The line of advancing Turks shuddered and, shuddering, the men seemed as if they had been shaken from their balance by some gigantic earthquake. With one impulse four to five thousand men had thrown themselves on their faces. The impetus had gone out of the attack. There was a lull in the crash of fire from the cover of the plantations surrounding Turk Bej. Spasmodic efforts were made by the Turks to infuse life again into the movement, but these efforts were but the signal for further out-

bursts of terrific fire from the enemy, whilst the whole hillside seemed shrouded in the dust which the shrapnel and rifle bullets churned up around the prostrate Turks. The forward impetus was killed.

Suddenly there was another movement. Again the hoarse-throated quick-firers spoke. Again the wicked automatics poured forth their leaden stream of destruction. Again the Mannlicher breech blocks worked to the fullest extent of their mechanism. The great counter attack had failed and the survivors were flying back to the cover of their positions.

When the Centurion woke the Diplomat the centre division of the Fourth Corps had just begun its retirement. It was a wonderful spectacle for a man who had never before seen a battle. The Bulgarian shrapnel was burst in such rapid confusion over the heads of the Turkish infantry, that the white smoke became a dome-like canopy, and the bursts were so incessant that the glint

of the flashes rose superior to the winter sunlight. As company after company of extended infantry sauntered back over the crest line it looked as if some gigantic ant's nest had been disturbed, and that the angry workers, pouring over the hillside, were evacuating their home.

The movement seemed to communicate itself to all the troops within view. The first line transport, the small residue of reserves, the ammunition columns came steadily down the reverse slopes. The only groups that remained detached from the general movement were the Turkish batteries nestling below the crest lines. These, alas, were few, but they made a noble effort to reply to the artillery inferno that the Bulgarians had marshalled against their devoted infantry. At last their effort had run its course. The teams came trotting up from below. The guns were hooked in and the batteries came thundering down the slopes.

The Centurion looked at his watch. He

had given up all hope of ever seeing his horses.

He detached the Diplomat from the thralldom of his field glasses.

"Look here, young feller," he said, "this is a retirement. They must be coming back to this ridge. The story of to-day's doings has got to be in Saturday's paper. It took us four hours to get here. It will take us all that—perhaps a little more to get back to Tchorlu. We must away. We cannot afford to take any risks. It is possible that Jew's Harp Senior has seen all this, and he may have a means of getting his news down by train to-night. We must get back. The Austrian Lloyd fortnightly packet is due to call at Rodosto to-morrow afternoon. It will be in Constantinople in six hours after it leaves there. That will permit censored messages to reach London in time for Saturday's paper. The uncensored big story will catch the Constanza boat on Saturday and be in Monday's paper. As for John, the idiot has missed his

way, been arrested, or done something foolish. We must give up all thought of him and the horses to-night. Much as I hate deserting the guns, especially at such a juncture, when anything may happen, yet, as far as we are concerned, no situation is interesting to our employers until they have the story of it in the paper."

"But has anything decisive happened?" protested the Diplomat who was looking for more concrete dividends.

"Matters are on the fair way to be decisive," answered the Centurion. "Personally, I don't quite understand why the whole of the Fourth Corps is coming back. You will remember that young Ahmed Riza Effendi said that the spoof retirement was to be confined to only one division. Presumably the absolute failure of the counter attack has upset all the preconceived intentions. Anyway there seems no valid reason why these people should come back. They are retiring in good enough order. Beyond the dressing down

with shrapnel that is being burst too high to be generally effective, they can have nothing pressing them. There must be some strategic reason for the withdrawal. Anyway they won't be coming far back, for there are forty positions that they can dispute between this and Tchorlu. We will get back to-night—send off our story, and, even if it be necessary for one of us to go to Constantinople, he will be back in time enough to get the next instalment of this battle. Both sides must take a breather soon."

Thus the adventurers turned back again.

As the car descended into the west valley it drove into Salih Pasha's Independent Cavalry Division. The division was halted with the First Lancers in front. Both the Diplomat and the Centurion had several acquaintances amongst the officers of the Constantinople Regiment. A couple of these spotted them and rode out from their squadrons to pass the time of day. These gay young swashbucklers looked very different after a month's

campaigning to what they had done in Pera when they swaggered up and down the leading cafés.

When asked why the Fourth Corps was falling back, they offered the opinion that Ahmed Abouk had not heard that the Independent Cavalry Division was on its way to support him. Then they gave the adventurers the first definite news that they had had of the whereabouts of the Jew's Harp Senior. The Cavalry had seen him in Lule Burgas during the stampede the night before. They had just imparted this information when Salih Pasha ordered the Division to move on. The Pera youths galloped back to their troops, and the Division lumbered heavily away, giving a definite demonstration of the utter weariness of both men and horses.

So the rival adventurer Jew's Harp had been in Lule Burgas when the stampede took place. What means had he to get his information back to the cables? It was possible that he had already slipped from the line on

an empty troop train. This uncertainty made it imperative that the adventurers should regain touch with the communications.

A couple of miles further back the adventurers met the first of their associates from Tchorlu. The General, attended by a syce, was found riding aimlessly across the veldt. The Centurion asked for news of the Bosniak Shepherd and his flock. The General could give but little information. He knew that the Dumpling, Jew's Harp Junior and one or two others had broken away. He believed that the residue of the adventurers, taking with them three days' food, had left Tchorlu that morning for the front. The General was absolutely without food. It is difficult to refuse a colleague meat, but when the telegraph office calls, the latter-day adventurer has no time for hospitable dalliance. A packet of milk chocolate was all that those in the motor car had time to disgorge.

Except for a few detachments of troops pushing up to the front, the road between the

actual battlefield and Karisdiran was practically clear. Here, however, further groups of the routed First Corps were met paddling their way back from Baba Eski. With them were strings of hospital carts freighted with the mangled frames of poor suffering devils who had been wounded in the early contacts of the battle. Some of them had not yet had their wounds dressed, and their hideous hurts were just bound up with any rag that came to hand.

It is important that the reader should realise that this broken soldiery met here, and spoken of as the fugitives of the First Army Corps, had not been engaged in the battle of Lule Burgas. They had been routed six days before at Yenidje; had fled thence to Baba Eski without reforming, and had then pushed on to Lule Burgas. Here, as has been shown, their presence had prejudiced the dispositions of the Commander of the Fourth Corps. Some had been rallied; but the majority, terrified by the appearance of the Bulgarians at

Lule Burgas, had continued their flight round the left flank of Ahmed Abouk's Corps towards Tchorlu. It was these disreputable soldiers that the foreign correspondents fell in with while the battle of Lule Burgas was being decided. It was their broken ranks and terror-stricken flight that furnished the lurid lights in the graphic description of the Turkish rout which galvanized Europe, and incidentally deceived the Bulgarians.

Just as Hamdi had skilfully negotiated the Karisdiran Causeway for the second time the adventurers met the Bosniak Shepherd for the last time. Supported by the bibulous Bey and his immaculate subaltern he was sailing along at the head of his flock, at least at the head of such of them as remained loyal to him. The Centurion was terrified lest he should attach the car. In reality the Bosniak was the personification of amiable simplicity. He was anxious to know if matters were moving favourably for the Turks at the front. To this query the Centurion replied, truth-

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In retreat from Lule Burgas across the bridge at Karisdiran

fully enough, "that the battle was progressing as well for the Turks as could be expected."

It never crossed the Bosniak's mind to detain the car, and with a wave and blessing to the few British adventurers who remained true to the flock the Diplomat and the Centurion disappeared from the official ken. The Centurion never returned to it.

It was dark before the adventurers, after many vicissitudes brought the car back to the han in Tchorlu. It had been a long and exciting day, at the end of which soul and stomach yearned for an appetising and full meal. The Diplomat, therefore, was duly complimentary concerning the Centurion's methods of organisation, when he found that an appetising hot meal was awaiting them at the han. It was none of your canned meats, by which campaigners pretend to live. It was a dish of stewed fresh kidneys and a chicken pilaff. It had been prepared in a private Armenian house hard by and only required warming to be ready for use. John as a caterer had his

points even though he had lost himself and the horses.

Over the repast the two adventurers laid their plans. There was just enough petrol to take the car to Rodosto to catch the Austrian Lloyd Packet. The Centurion suggested that he himself should go to Rodosto with the car and try to find petrol there. If there was none, then Hamdi, or even the Centurion himself, must go to Constantinople to secure a supply. It, therefore, behoved the Diplomat to write his great battle dispatch at once, as the start must be made at daybreak. The Diplomat fell to immediately and between semi-somnolent periods was writing through the night.

At daybreak the following morning the Centurion and the Diplomat parted company. The Centurion, doing messenger for the latter, sped in the car away to Rodosto and the cables; while the Diplomat taking to horse returned to the battle area.

## CHAPTER VII

### A LONE LINE

IN ordinary circumstances the journey from Tchorlu to Rodosto should have been made within the hour. Owing to the fact, however, that the road, for the last six weeks, had been one of the main communications of the Turkish Army, it was in a terrible state. It, therefore, took the car just over two hours to reach the coast town. Considering the great events that were taking place between Tchorlu and Lule Burgas, the road was extremely empty. Here again the Centurion witnessed the extraordinary spectacle of fresh troops marching up hotfoot to the front, being crossed on the journey by stragglers from the beaten army, wandering at their ease towards the coast. There was no surveillance of the line of communications, no one in au-

thority to check the fugitives or to arrange for the orderly passage of the communications transport. It may be said here in parenthesis, that in spite of the fact that the coast towns of this portion of the Marmora were ringing with stories of excesses and depredations effected by the savage soldiery of the disorganised Turkish Army, yet as far as the Centurion was able to judge, there was not an atom of truth in any of these wild stories. It seemed to him that the Turkish soldier was so stupid and heavy, that he was more likely to starve from his own impracticability than to attempt any outrage upon the villages through which he passed.

The town of Rodosto lies in a picturesque enclave between two hills on the Marmora coast line. It is a commercial town of some considerable importance, and when once Thrace is opened up and exploited, as its fertility warrants, Rodosto should become one of the most flourishing open roadsteads in the Levant. It is a chief centre of the canary

seed trade, an industry which, the writer is told, is in its small way as speculative as that of cotton. Nearly all the canary seed grown in Turkey is exported to the United States. One wonders how many of the dear old ladies, buying their five cents' worth of canary seed at their favoured store, realise that the fields in which this commodity is raised have recently been trampled by the carriages and tumbrils of cannon, and the weary feet of thousands of striving soldiery.

There is no need to give a minute description of Rodosto. In the matter of squalid architecture and filthy dressing, all Turkish towns are similar. The last few miles before the car reached Rodosto, it caught the tail end of the mighty exodus that had taken place from all the up-country villages. It appears that the Turkish authorities had let it be understood that all the refugees from the villages in Northern Thrace would, if they made their way down to the Marmora, be given free transport across to Asia.

A Turkish intimation of this nature does not by any means bear the interpretation of immediate fulfilment. Rodosto's narrow streets were packed with thousands of country carts. Each of these carts had a living freight of old men, women and children. To the European, these people appear to be not only in the last stage of destitution, but of absolute misery. It does not do, however, for the European to order his sentimental feelings by comparison with similar conditions among the peoples of his own kind. These people were not feeling the privations as would have a more civilised race. Instinctively, all the Turks settled in Europe are nomads. Four hundred years ago, their ancestors trekked into Thrace in the wake of Mustapha Pasha's successful armies, in much the same state of poverty and discomfort, as these their descendants were now suffering. As one of the old men amongst them said to Hamdi: "Our forefathers were from Asia, and we their descendants are going back." This simple sen-

tence seemed to include the entire philosophy of this wandering race.

As is usual in all Turkish coast towns and villages of any commercial importance, there are two distinct quarters that have foreign interests. The first of these is the group of commercial offices raised as close to the customs quay as possible, in which all commercial business is transacted. The other is usually a little removed. It is the residential quarter of the consular corps.

Rodosto was no exception to this rule. With infinite difficulty, the car was forced through the crowded streets until it reached the customs sheds. Here the Centurion left Hamdi to take the car to the nearest han, whilst he set himself to discover the domicile of the British vice-consul. The moment he stepped out of the car, he was surrounded by a group of wild-eyed Greeks, who plied him for information regarding the battle he had just left. Was it true that the Bulgarians were only an hour's march away from Ro-

dosto? Did he think it was likely that the Turks would order the massacre of the Christians before they left Rodosto or before the Bulgarians could make an entry? Was it a fact that the Turks had been absolutely defeated and that Adrianople had been burnt to the ground on the previous evening?

If the Centurion had not had some experience of Levantine nerves, he might have been upset by this evidence of really heartfelt distress. He thought it best to dissemble and he assured his anxious audience that they had nothing to fear, that the Turks might be winning "hands down" all along the line, for there were no Bulgarians nearer than Lule Burgas. The way that the Greeks' faces fell, when they heard that the Turks were winning, was a definite indication of their feelings. Although they were anxious that the Turks should be beaten and driven out of Europe, yet they were so fearful that in the process of elimination the Turks, in their own kindly way, would have one last chance of getting

even with the Christian element, that they were torn with hopes and fears which only those who have knowledge of the Levant can appreciate.

The Centurion was led by one of the Greeks to the office of a gentleman who was introduced to him as the British vice-consul. This gentleman, who could speak no English and who rejoiced in an Italian name well-known in the Levant, repudiated the soft impeachment that he was the responsible British functionary. He explained the mistake in this manner. Until the outbreak of the Turco-Italian war, he had held the office of British vice-consul. Owing to the fact that he was an Italian, it was impossible for him to continue in this exalted position whilst his nation was at loggerheads with the Ottoman government. He, therefore, had been permitted to transfer his dignified mantle to the only British resident in the town.

There is something very wrong with the organisation of the British consular service in

these places. Presumably, the duty of the British consul is to look after the interests of British firms and British shipping. Is it to be believed that any satisfactory assistance can be given to a bluff sea captain of a coasting tramp, when he cannot converse with his consul, except through the medium of an untrustworthy dragoman? Is it to be believed that a Levantine Italian could ever judge of a British sea captain's troubles from the standpoint of British thought?

This criticism may go further. In all its ramifications the Levantine consular service is organised as a kind of subsidiary secret service for the British embassy. The officers in the Levantine service, imagining themselves to be diplomats, erroneously think that their first duty is that of secret service agents, and they only regard their commercial duties as a necessary evil subservient to the diplomatic position they pretend. This is totally wrong and British trade and British interests would be far better served if some strong influence at the Foreign Office would make it be clearly un-

derstood that the services for which the Britisher pays his taxes, is that the Empire's commercial interests and enterprises shall be fostered and furthered by the consuls employed to this end. How often has not the writer seen a humble British sea captain kicking his heels in the waiting room of some consulate, or a merchant in desperate need of immediate assistance, while the pseudo-diplomat is wasting their time and the public money by putting into cipher the foolish and lying gossip which is the stock in trade of the Levantine consular corps. The German and American services can teach the British service many trenchant lessons in the true conception of consular duties, but the frog that imagines he can reach the dimensions of a bull, will learn no lesson during the period of his inflation.

In the special circumstances of the Centurion, it was a blessing that the Englishman was acting as vice-consul. The Centurion at once discovered from him, as he had feared, that the Dumpling, having arrived in the Panhard

early on the preceding day, had bought up every litre of petrol in the town. There had not been a great quantity, but one or two people had motor launches. The Dumpling had made an absolute corner and there was not another piastre's worth to be found.

The vice-consul told the Centurion that it had taken the Dumpling about three hours to make his corner in spirit. Then he had gone off in his car by the Muradli road to the front. With regard to communications, the consul said there were two boats due to go to Constantinople that evening. One was the Marmora express and the other, the Austrian Lloyd packet. He had heard that there was some delay to shipping at the Dardanelles. It was, therefore, possible that the Austrian Lloyd might be detained.

The Centurion's car had arrived at Rodosto with hardly half a litre of petrol to spare. Without the spirit, therefore, he was absolutely immobile. Knowing the ways of Turkey and the Levant, he made up his mind that

it was essential that he himself go to Constantinople to buy the essence so vital to his mobility. By doing this he served every purpose. He would be certain of the despatch both of his own and the Diplomat's messages, and he would also be certain of getting the spirit back to Rodosto in the shortest possible time. With the best will in the world, agents in the Levant, however highly paid, however trustworthy, have that vague appreciation of the value of time which is one of the main characteristics of all the races who live within the shadow of Asia Minor. It is a characteristic which is even acquired by those trained in other schools, after a short residence in the Levant.

The vice-consul pointed out, that although there were two boats to sail for Constantinople that evening, it was probable there would be no further sailing for two or three days. The spirit of rivalry is so poignant amongst these latter-day adventurers, that the Centurion, metaphorically speaking, rubbed his hands at

this information. It meant in all probability that he and the Diplomat alone of the four Englishmen who had been expeditious enough actually to participate in the battle of Lule Burgas, would be the only ones that got the news to London in time for Saturday's and Monday's papers. The boats, however, were not due to leave Rodosto until sundown, and the Centurion spent the day dividing his time in writing his own despatch and anxiously listening for the sound of the Dumpling's Panhard. As far as the Centurion could make out the probabilities, it was only by means of the Panhard, that he could be caught in the race for the wires. There had been the probability of the railway as an alternative route, but experience had shown that empty trains returning, sometimes took as long as sixty hours to cover the distance from Tchorlu to Stamboul. The Centurion's anxiety was not altogether alleviated, however, when by sundown the Austrian Lloyd packet had not arrived. Although the Centurion by booking

a passage on the Express steamer would carry out his own plans as he had calculated them, yet the non-arrival of the Austrian Lloyd meant that she would probably arrive on the morrow. This, conceivably, would give his rivals an extra twenty-four hours in which to catch the Constanza connection from Constantinople. Anyway, the race was his as far as the censored messages direct from Constantinople were concerned.

Lay readers may not realise how much these estimates in hours mean to newspapers. In certain circumstances, a great London journal will stand the expenditure almost of a king's ransom, if such expenditure will place its news twenty-four hours ahead of its rivals.

As the Centurion installed himself on the deck of the Express steamer, which was crowded to its full capacity by well-to-do Levantine refugees, he observed that at the military pier, work was being pushed strenuously forward to re-embark the warlike stores that were heaped up on the wharf. This in

conjunction with the fact that he had found no confusion on the road up to Tchorlu, suggested that orders had arrived that day for the abandonment of the Rodosto-Tchorlu road as a line of communication to the army. This was rather a disquieting discovery, as it suggested that the Turkish field armies proposed to retire further south than Tchorlu. As far as the Centurion had been able to form an opinion on the ground, there was not the slightest necessity for such a precipitate retirement. At least he could see no such necessity upon the merits of the action as it had been fought. He did not then know how absolutely the administrative services of those armies had failed, and that want of food and ammunition, rather than Bulgarian shrapnel, had determined the minister of war to order a general retirement upon Tcherkeskuey.

## CHAPTER VIII

### BACK TO THE HUNT

THERE is an expression in American slang, which is eloquently descriptive of personal satisfaction. As the Centurion stepped out of his *araba* and entered the Pera Palace Hotel on the following morning, he "felt good," as this expression has it. Barring a truculent censor and the Act of God, there was nothing between him and the realisation of the object of all his efforts. The Marmora Express lands its passengers at Galata full early in the morning. The Centurion was able, therefore, to disappear into the privacy of his room without going under the cynosure of all and sundry of the guests at the hotel. As everybody who has stayed in this institution knows, the hall porter is the personification of discretion. The Centurion had only to suggest to this functionary that he

was still to be considered as being at the front with the Turkish army, and he knew that his presence would not be disclosed.

How a message was sent to the Centurion's colleague in the capital, and how this colleague loyally placed himself at his disposal throughout the day, is not part of this narrative. It will suffice to say that all arrangements for the despatch of the messages were satisfactorily accomplished, a supply of petrol puchased and placed upon a special launch that was hired to take the Centurion back to Rodosto that evening.

It was considered expedient that the Centurion should not appear openly in the capital, as it was just possible, in the circumstances, that the General Staff might not appreciate the fact that there was direct information from the armies in the field already arrived in Pera. Constantinople itself was in a fever of excitement. Although the General Staff had issued daily bulletins to the effect that Mahmud Muktear Pasha was having big and continued

successes on the Viza front; that the Fourth and Second Corps were holding their own manfully at Lule Burgas, yet there was other and more truthful information circulating, which told of disasters in the field and hinted at the general retirement which had already taken place.

Pera is the home of rumours and even distances Shanghai in the amazing quality of its falsehoods. It was generally believed that morning, in European circles, that the Turkish Army, utterly routed and actively pursued, was stampeding for Tchataldja. Colour was given to this exaggerated statement of the situation at the front, first by the wish of Levantine circles that was father to the thought, and secondly by the clever fabrications which the Bulgarian General Staff permitted to pass as news to a privileged paper in Vienna.

From this latter source, the whole of the press of Europe was inspired with a continual story of Bulgarian heroism. In spite of the

fact that the Bulgarian successes were admirable enough in the naked narrative of truth, the world was informed of magnificent exploits by independent cavalry; of terrific carnage at the point of glistening bayonets; of tactical successes, Napoleonic in their conception and Japanese in their realisation. Before these word pictures, a truthful narrative was a tepid and unworthy lucubration.

The Bulgarian General Staff had doubtless entered the province of the news agency business with a definite object. With admirable secrecy they had veiled the conduct of their campaign in its earlier stages. They did not at this moment wish Europe to know that their much vaunted system of supply and transport had developed unexpected limitations. It was not to their advantage that Europe should realise the poignant truth of the casual remark which it will be remembered the Centurion had made to the Diplomat: "Both sides must take a breather soon." While the British Ambassador, upon information received from

the British legation at Sofia, was telling his colleagues that the Bulgarian independent cavalry had appeared athwart the line of retreat of the Turkish armies and had turned that retreat into a hopeless rout; while the privileged Vienna newspaper was telling Europe of the Turkish Sedan which had made the dry bed of the Tchorlu River run red with Ottoman blood, the Bulgarian armies, faint and exhausted, were resting on their arms, counting their losses and thanking the Christian's God that something had intervened to make the Turks evacuate the positions which they themselves were too exhausted to face again.

The launch which the Centurion hired to take him and his petrol back to Rodosto, was timed to leave the Galata wharf at seven in the evening. It was a stout little harbour tug of about sixty tons, and it was considered capable of doing the voyage to Rodosto in six or seven hours. Although the vessel flew the British flag, it was captained and manned by Greek and Italian Levantines. When the Centurion

went on board, he found that neither the skipper nor crew could speak a word of English or French. In ordinary circumstances this should not have mattered. There had, however, been an angry sunset, and it looked very much as if the tug might chance into dirty weather. These Levantine sailors are particularly weatherwise, and as the tug cast off its moorings, the sailors in a neighbouring boat gave them a peculiar send-off, which was ominous in its friendly sarcasm.

The elements of fortune enter into our daily lives in some inconceivable manner. Without worrying about the psychology of the law of chances, it is certain that there is some rule which intervenes to mend or mar all enterprise designed by human artifice. During the earlier portion of this campaign, there was a vein of misfortune that put a certain drag upon the carefully laid plans in the Centurion's campaign. To begin with, he had started the adventure weighted down with a transient malady that might well have con-

fined him to his bed. Once free of this malady, he was faced with the shortage of petrol on the arrival of his car. Again, on the culminating day of the battle of Lule Burgas, his henchman had failed to arrive at the tryst with his horses, and now he was to be faced with another set-back in the spin of the wheel of fortune. This is not set down as a peevish endeavour to explain away any element of failure. It is only mentioned to show how one adventurer may have to struggle against the many elements of adverse chance, while another will have the good fortune to find success through channels totally unforeseen.

The launch had not been an hour at sea when she struck one of those furious local gales, for which the Marmora is famous. Of the malady from which the Centurion suffered, stowed away in a narrow fo'c'sle bunk, there is no necessity to speak. The passing personal inconvenience of *mal-de-mer* is nothing in the scheme of things. What that storm meant, however, was that much of the Centu-

rion's energy and despatch was wasted, since the rain that fell in sheets would render the road impassable for his car between Rodosto and Tchorlu. The writer will not dwell upon the hideous sufferings in that fo'c'sle, but at one period towards midnight, the situation became so desperate that the skipper, dripping wet, made his way down to the Centurion, and shaking his head with gloomy energy, pointed suggestively to his feet. Being unable to converse with him, except in the most primitive Italian, the Centurion realised, between the paroxysms of his malady, that the captain suggested that any attempt to continue the voyage was courting destruction. On personal grounds, the Centurion was in such a state of collapse that he felt that the sinking of the craft would have been a happy release, but he had his duty to consider, and so he murmured "Courage" and turned over on his side, leaving the captain to work out the salvation of his boat as best he could. Three times between midnight and morning the skipper

came down to try and induce the Centurion to agree to a return passage to Constantinople, maintaining that in the last three hours the boat had not made more than a knot. With daylight, however, the tempest somewhat abated and by ten in the morning the tug was almost rolling her boilers loose in the open Rodosto roadstead.

## CHAPTER IX

### A ROGUE HOUND

THE Centurion's worst fears were realised. The hills behind Rodosto were clouded in dim mists and it was pouring rain. It was evident that it must be days before the car would be able to negotiate the road to Tchorlu. There were, too, further disappointments in store. After the usual difficulties of landing, the Centurion made his way to the house of the British Vice Consul, to learn, as he had feared, that on the previous day his most dangerous rivals had reached Rodosto in the Panhard. What was worse, the Austrian Lloyd that should have run to time, came in the same afternoon that they arrived. They had boarded her and were now safely in Constantinople in time to catch the Constanza communication. This meant that although they had missed Saturday's paper, yet they would

run equal with the Centurion and the Diplomat in the long and uncensored messages that would appear in the Monday's papers. Of such is the fortune of war.

The Centurion learned that, if that particular Austrian Lloyd boat had not run twenty-four hours late, there would not have been another boat to take the adventurers to Constantinople for at least three days. Three days in the life of war news is a very big affair. The disappointment was natural. The Centurion could not but feel at the same time some satisfaction that his close friends and colleagues had not been put in the humiliating position of having to wait days to get their messages away. They were both dear fellows and had undergone the same strenuous difficulties as himself. The Vice Consul said that the two had passed a nerve-shaking day in Rodosto. They of course knew that the Centurion was away with the news, and it was uncertain, owing to the existing state of war and its attendant difficulties at the Dardanelles,

whether the Austrian Lloyd boat would put into Rodosto at all. As the afternoon drew on and there seemed to be little chance that the boat would arrive, both the Dumpling and his companion had fallen into the depths of dejection. Then suddenly the packet appeared round the point and they were transported to the seventh Heaven of delight. Only a journalist can appreciate their feelings at this moment.

The Centurion tried to glean some information from the Vice Consul of what had happened at the front since he himself had left. The latter, however, knew nothing and said that both his visitors of the previous day had discreetly maintained an absolute silence concerning the happenings in which they had participated. There was, however, considerable evidence in the town that much disintegration had taken place in the Ottoman armies of the left wing. Rodosto had filled up in an extraordinary manner with deserters from the army. A large percentage of these were of

the Christian element, which since the revolution the Turks had admitted to military service. The craven attitude of many of these was deplorable. They were without money or food and were begging from door to door, not only for bread, but for civilian clothing, that they might shed their uniforms and thus disappear from the military ken.

Rodosto is full of Geeks and Armenians. This particular type is not over-scrupulous in its methods of making money. Brand new Mausers were purchasable for five piastres, while handfuls of ammunition were thrown gratis into the bargain. The Armenians who engaged in this traffic in arms defended their action in these transactions by claiming that they feared every moment the Turks would let the *canaille* of the town loose upon them; they, therefore, had no compunction in buying Turkish arms in order to defend their homes and families from the final vengeance of the Crescent. This, of course, in the majority of cases, was all eyewash. The Armenians were

not content with this one traffic; they carried their nefarious transactions into another field. They were battening on the misfortunes of the thousands of Turkish refugees dumped down upon them. They purchased for a song the live stock of these poor wretches. In spite of their nomadic traditions, the refugees were now suffering awful experiences. It had rained without intermission since the preceding night. The town being on the slope of a hillside, the streets in places had become rivulets. The mud and filth collected during the recent extraordinary conditions of life was in most places ankle deep. The rain had come in with a piercing cold wind and it was a heartrending sight to see families curled up in the slush, trying to keep their miserable bodies warm by burning the cart wheels which had brought them to the coast. Babies were cradled in slush. Women and children were drenched to the skin. The live stock that was these poor vagrants' sole worldly wealth, was sold for a trifle to the rapacious Armenians in

order that the simplest necessities of life might be forthcoming. Trust an Armenian or a Greek to miss an opportunity! They knew that they had the refugees in the hollow of their hand and they at once made a corner in bread, and no refugee could purchase this simple commodity except at extortionate rates. Is it to be wondered that the simple and slow-thinking Turk has at times risen in his wrath and exterminated in their hundreds these parasites?

It was to unhappy surroundings that the Centurion had returned. The consular corps which consisted of a group of Levantine Vice Consuls, was still obsessed with the belief that the moment the Turks finally evacuated the town, they would leave orders behind them for a general massacre. The wires which were still working to Constantinople, were kept red hot with pathetic appeals in cipher for foreign warships to be sent to save the Christian from the onslaught which was never even meditated. The Centurion did his best to allay the

fears of this cowering section of the European race. He pointed out that there was no certainty that the Turks were in such desperate straits, that they would leave the town without a garrison. The word "massacre," however, has been so seared into the brain of the Christian Levantine, that the conditions of his squalid life have only to be removed a fraction from the normal and he believes himself and his compatriots to be in imminent danger of a violent death.

Having been interviewed by each of the Levantine representatives of the foreign powers domiciled in Rodosto, and having heartened up each in turn with the promise that they would not be massacred forthwith, the Centurion wandered down to the han to see how matters went with Hamdi and the car.

At the han he found Adolphe. Adolphe is the Dumpling's dragoman. He is altogether a very estimable personage. He calls himself an Austrian and he carries himself with

the dignity of a man of knowledge and account. Adolphe, knowing the close relationship between the Centurion and the Dumpling, was expansive as to the latter's adventures. After he had made the corner in petrol, the Dumpling took the Muradli road and arrived at that station on the Thracian railway just before sundown. As has already been explained, the road from Rodosto to Muradli is the only real provincial road in European Turkey. The Dumpling's chauffeur, who was a young, excitable youth, having gained confidence at the progress he had made on the sound metalled bottom, thought that he could take the heavy Panhard with equal audacity along the country roads. The result was disastrous and the great forty horse-power car stuck hopelessly in the slough. The disaster was so complete that it was impossible to correct anything that night. The car had to be left where it was and, on foot, the Dumpling and his retainers made their way to Muradli Station. Here they were on

the fringe of the operations. Muradli was a point that many hundreds of broken troops from the First Corps touched. The Dumpling found the station commandant hospitable and discursive. Even with his good will it was impossible to move the car that night. It remained where it was and in the morning, with the aid of bullocks, it was at last dragged out of the mudhole. The Dumpling then cut across country to the Tchorlu road to find himself in the midst of the retiring Turkish army. With great difficulty the heavy car was urged on through phalanxes of retreating soldiers, and reached the han at Tchorlu late in the evening. Here the Dumpling found some of the other adventurers, who, during the retirement, had broken away from the Bosniak Shepherd. Here was found Jew's Harp Senior, who after most terrible experiences at the front with Abdullah's headquarters had, by an almost miraculous succession of fortunate events, arrived back at Tchorlu almost in the last state of exhaustion. If he had not been

able, on this particular night, again to join forces with his partner in the Panhard, it is probable that the brilliant description of his desperate experiences would never have reached his paper in time to have realised the success that they deserved. Early the following morning he and the Dumpling fled in the car to Rodosto and by the skin of their teeth, as has been shown, caught the overdue Austrian Lloyd boat. In such circumstances are journalistic triumphs made.

Hamdi was next consulted as to the possibility of the car making the journey to Tchorlu. He shook his head despondently. Hamdi was as anxious to get back to the front as his master. Nature, however, had intervened. As there was no definite information to be found in Rodosto, the Centurion determined to make a reconnoissance to Muradli Station. The metalled road to this point was possible in all weathers. Local reports in the town were definite that Bulgarian troops would be found half a dozen miles outside the

town. Circumstantial evidence was tendered as to the treatment the invaders had extended to the villagers. The Centurion would accept none of this. According to his calculation there was still no reason why the Turks should have fallen back from this point.

The members of the consular body looked upon the reconnoissance as a foolhardy affair, but they were a chicken-hearted body. The road to Muradli was all that was claimed for it. It was ominously deserted and the car just spun along. Within three miles of the Station the car met a great collection of village carts heading for the town. They were in charge of an aged Mulazim in faded uniform, and a round dozen of decrepit mustafiz (last ban reservists). The Centurion learned from the officer that he was clearing the villages of all food stuff that could be of any use to the enemy. He was confident that Ottoman troops were still at Muradli. The Centurion was pleased to find that the Turks could show such workmanlike energy as to clear the coun-

try before the enemy, but this energy foretold a contemplated evacuation.

As the car crossed the iron bridge into Muradli village there seemed an absolute lack of life about both the village and the station buildings. There was no rolling stock. The place was deserted. Hamdi took the car right on to the metals, and pulled up in front of the booking office. Save for a tame little brown mongrel, that showed unwonted signs of joy at the arrival of humans, and a flock of astonished geese there was nothing living in the place. The station offices were locked. Except for a few jettisoned pontoons and a half dozen old pattern ammunition wagons the place was cleared of all military stores. Sign of living Turk or Bulgar there was none. The Centurion swept the far horizon of the gently sloping downs with his glasses, and peered long down the parallel of the dead straight, permanent way. Crest line and vanishing point betrayed not the slightest evidence of any living thing.

The Centurion was nonplussed. It was evident that the Turks had retired. It was just as obvious that the Bulgarians had not advanced. The Turks had retired in good order, since they had taken everything with them. The useless material they had jettisoned was neatly parked in the station yard as for inspection. It was impossible that the Bulgarians had pushed on, on the heels of the Turks, without occupying Muradli. Strategically such an omission was unthinkable. The railway was of vital importance to them, for though Adrianople still refused them the main line, yet they had captured two locomotives and rolling stock at Kirk Kilisse. There was only one solution. The Bulgarians at Lule Burgas had, as the Centurion had thought, put their last ounce into the battle and had not been able to advance since. No other reasoning would stand examination.

Although Muradli was not on the direct march route from Lule Burgas to Tchorlu, yet the top of the ridge over which that road

passed was visible from the station. Muradli Station lay two-thirds of the way between Lule Burgas and Tchorlu at the bend of the Ergene River. There was no movement on the ridge. It would have been impossible for an army to pass that way without first occupying Muradli.

"Well," said the Centurion to Hamdi, "if the Bulgarians are not here, they ought to be. Anyway they are likely to come here pretty d—d quick. We had better not stay or we may be nabbed by some inquisitive patrol."

On returning to Rodosto the Centurion found unexpected confirmation of the diagnosis he had made at Muradli. The Vice-Consul reported that he had heard that three more adventurers had arrived at the han from Tchorlu. The Centurion straight away went down and discovered his French colleagues. They had left Tchorlu that morning and ridden down to the coast. They were overjoyed at finding the Centurion, who had already been reported killed.

As soon as they could be induced to talk coherently, the Centurion gathered that they had broken away that morning because the Bosniak Shepherd had ordered the residue of his flock to abandon their stores, and take train immediately for Tcherkeskuey. They said that on the night when the Centurion had last seen them they had had a trying experience. They had bivouacked out on the veldt. On the morrow they had been overtaken by the army in retreat and hustled back to Tchorlu.

Rather than suffer further at the hands of the Turks, the Frenchmen had thrown in their hands and determined to take the first boat to Pera. They said that all the English adventurers had disappeared and that the Germans and Russians alone remained loyal to the Bosniak Shepherd. They dilated on the horrors they had seen; the dangers on the road to Tchorlu; the corpses of refugees dead of cholera and a thousand and one terrors. It was evident that they had contracted the epidemic known as "cold feet." This epidemic was

curiously prevalent at that period in the Turkish Army. It was, however, almost exclusively confined to the ranks of the partially trained troops.

The concrete information that they were able to give the Centurion was encouraging. There was still a very large Turkish force in occupation of Tchorlu and, to the Frenchmen, it looked as if this force intended to stay there as it was busily engaged in throwing up field works on positions covering the town on the north.

On the following morning Hamdi gave a dubious assent to attempt the return journey to Tchorlu. An early start was made. For the first five miles progress was fair. There were evidences on the road, as suggested by the Frenchmen, that some epidemic—or perhaps starvation and exhaustion—had overtaken several of the fugitives. It was curious to find that the rearward movement of fugitives seemed to have stopped. The only troops that were passed on the road were small formed

bodies heading to Tchorlu. After the fifth mile the road passes over a long swampy plateau. Here misfortune overtook the car. Hamdi had feared this plateau. His worst fears were realized. The car sank into a morass; the wheels lost their purchase, and the machine became hopelessly bogged. Hamdi, however, was an energetic fatalist, and he said cheerily, "No good—go fetch cow." There was no village in sight, but he trudged off happily.

There are moments when it is legitimate even for an optimist to give way to despondency. For the next six hours the Centurion sank as deeply into the Slough of Despond as his car had penetrated into the trough of the morass. The wind had veered round to the north again, and blew in bitter draught across the plateau. There was not a living thing in sight. Only the boundless area of the billowy downs. It is hard to imagine a more oppressive solitude. To be absolutely alone with an immobile car in the centre of a great grassy

wilderness in Thrace! The impotence of it all!

From time to time groups of Turkish soldiers sauntered past and gazed upon the incongruous spectacle with lazy indolence. A few of the more curious came and passed the time of day and earned as a remuneration for their welcome curiosity the gift of a cigarette. It was the sense of impotence that crushed the spirit. The Centurion fell to wondering what the Diplomat, his partner in the car, must be thinking and whether he was waiting his return to Tchorlu. Perhaps he also had given him up as lost or dead.

After an absence of two hours, Hamdi loomed up on the horizon with his "cow." He had commandeered a pair of buffaloes and a driver. It would have seemed just if, at this period, the tribulations of the journey had ended. However, it was not so. The buffaloes were hitched in, and with Hamdi and the driver at their tails, they took the strain. There was a sickening crack, and the yoke

broke into two pieces. With this the cup was full. Even Hamdi ceased to smile.

After a moment's reflection he borrowed a cigarette from the Centurion, and bade him mind the cow-boy and the team while he trudged back the three miles to find another and a stronger yoke. The next two hours the Centurion passed in absolute misery. At last Hamdi returned with a serviceable harness. Opportunely a squad of soldiers arrived simultaneously. With their help, and that of the engines, the buffaloes finally towed the car at a snail's pace through the swamp. The remainder of the journey was tedious going. There was not, however, another serious delay and towards evening the minarets of Tchorlu separated from the winter mists, and the car climbed the last rise into the village. It had taken eight hours to do the twenty-two kilometers.

There was no doubt about the Turks still being in occupation of Tchorlu. The temporary barracks on the Rodosto side of the vil-

lage were teeming with soldiers. For the first and only time during the campaign the Centurion was stopped and questioned by an examining post at the entrance to the village. The interrogation was perfunctory. It was remarkable, nevertheless, what inadequate measures for protection had been taken. The Centurion found that Hakki Pasha's division and the headquarters of the Fourth Corps were at Tchorlu. Although an adequate line of outposts had been thrown out to the north of Tchorlu cantonments and railway station, there was nothing protective along the front by which the car had arrived beyond the one examining post. An enterprising Bulgarian squadron leader could have had a lot of fun if he had slipped round by way of the Rodosto road. But there had been little worthy of the name of enterprise on either side in this dully conducted campaign.

It was a pleasure to the Centurion to feel that he was back with Ahmed Abouk's command. He now discovered the Fourth Corps

had not had much to be ashamed of in spite of the brilliant word-painting of those of his colleagues, who had let themselves go on the "retreat from Moscow" racket. It is curious how quickly the accomplished journalist can see red, and how difficult he finds it to draw the line between rout and retirement. Fortunately there were no professional journalists with the Tirah Field Force when it scuttled down the Bara Valley in 1897. If there had been, the historical exactitude of the operation would have been as prostituted as has been the retirement of the Turkish Armies from Lule Burgas. These things are difficult to explain to the lay mind. The proof of the pudding, so runs the time worn adage, lies in the eating. Here was the Centurion at Tchorlu, six days after the general retirement of the Turkish Army was ordered from the line Lule Burgas-Viza. Tchorlu was only thirty-five kilometers—that is one day's march—from the battlefield. At Tchorlu was a Turkish rearguard consisting of the complete infantry di-

vision which had covered the retirement of the left wing of the Turkish armies and between it and the enemy again, was Salih Pasha's independent cavalry division. For five days neither of these divisions had fired a single round. Where then was the rout? Someone or another has lost his sense of proportion. It was the First Corps that was routed, and this was at Yenidje days before the struggle at Lule Burgas.

Tchorlu was simply bristling with troops. It was with difficulty that the car was able to make its way through the streets. The batteries were all lined up in the main thoroughfare. The teams were feeding with their harness on ready to hook in if an emergency should require sudden movement. The Centurion drove direct to the han, hoping that he should find the Diplomat and his own caravan there. The *hanji,* who recognised him as the truculent adventurer who had destroyed his bedroom furniture and then paid handsomely for it, received him with open arms. Alas! John,

the Caravan, and the last of the foreign adventurers had left the previous day by march route for the south. Somehow the Centurion did not fancy the han, so he went out and tried the empty house in which the Diplomat, the Innocent and the Popinjay had lodged. The caretaker, having reaped a rich harvest from these three, welcomed the Centurion. The latter having shared his last lunch-tongue with Hamdi for the evening repast, was only too glad to turn in.

## CHAPTER X

### STILL A ROGUE

IT would be difficult to describe the true state in which the Centurion found the village of Tchorlu in the morning. As the north wind of the previous day had foreshadowed, it had again turned bitterly cold. The town was absolutely packed with Turkish soldiers muffled up to the eyes in their overcoats and bashliks. They looked the picture of misery, but all soldiers look thus when they are campaigning in winter weather. There was, however, no disorder. All the bakers' shops were working at high pressure. There was a guard upon every bakery, and no issue of bread was allowed unless it was through the agency of the particular non-commissioned officer in charge of the supply. The town was picketed throughout and thoroughly patrolled by the gendarmerie. All these duties were of

course carried out in the casual, slovenly manner which is characteristic of Turkish methods.

There was one matter, however, that escaped all surveillance. This was the sanitary control. The state of the Tchorlu streets absolutely beggars description. One has read of the filth that was wont to accumulate in the middle ages in English towns. In the midst of modern conveniences, one shudders to think of what those conditions were. Imagine, therefore, the state of the narrow streets of this Turkish village after thousands of soldiers had passed through and an entire division had been billeted in it for a matter of five or six days. It was simply horrible and in the winter's stillness a kind of pungent reek hung over the whole place. If ever epidemic disease was courted it was in these filthy surroundings.

As soon as Hamdi had refreshed him with a jorum of cocoa, the Centurion made his way to the headquarters of Ahmed Abouk Pasha. On occasions like this the man who observes

the formality of sending in his card to a Turkish dignitary only courts delay. The Centurion walked boldly into the corps commander's room. The dear old fellow, who looked more like a bronzed English farmer than a Turk, showed no resentment. He was obviously surprised to find the Englishman at the front and his first remark was:

"Why are you here? All the foreigners and attachés have been sent away long ago."

The Centurion answered that he had been fortunate enough to lose his way, but he was now glad that he had done so, since it gave him the opportunity of rejoining the best corps in the Turkish Army, and that, anyway, it was his business to see fighting and not to hear about it second hand. The old man's eyes twinkled at this naïve confession of faith, as he answered: "You are not going to see any more fighting just yet, because the Bulgarians will not come on, and I have orders to retire my division to Tcherkeskuey."

The Marshal then gave a résumé of all that

happened to his corps since the eventful day when the Centurion had been with it in front of Lule Burgas. Much of the information he gave has already been inserted in the preceding narrative. He said that Hakki Pasha's division had remained as rearguard until the whole of the rest of his own Corps and the Second Army Corps had been withdrawn. The Bulgarians, it appears, made one rather feeble essay to force in this rearguard, but they were easily checked, and it had fallen back without opposition to Ciflikkuey and Sandakli and then to Tchorlu without firing a shot. Mahmud Muktear's corps, on the extreme right of the Turkish line, according to Ahmed Abouk's information, had been forced to retire, both from Bunar Hissar and Viza in conformation with the retirement on the left.

Here there had been some effort at pursuit by the Bulgarians and when the right Turkish wing, still conforming to the general retirement, fell back to Sarai, it was still feebly harassed. At Sarai all pursuit had finished

and Mahmud Muktear's army had fallen back leisurely upon the new alignment.

"But why did you retire at all, Excellency?"

The Pasha's face hardened.

"We fell back because it was ordered so by fate. You may tell your friends in England that if the Fourth Army Corps was beaten, it was beaten by ourselves. My men had no food for over fifty hours. The best soldiers in the world cannot fight in these circumstances. What is worse, the supply of ammunition failed. I had to collect every unused round from my other divisions in order that the batteries of Hakki Pasha's rearguard should have sufficient at least to make a pretence of keeping the Bulgarians back. But the enemy were in no better condition than ourselves and if I had only had food I would have driven them back upon the Maritza with the bayonet."

"And the future, Excellency?" asked the Centurion. The Pasha turned up the palms

of his hands in the impressive gesticulation of the East. "It is in the hands of God. It was the first intention of Nazim Pasha that we should hold Tchorlu. Then it was changed to Tcherkeskuey. Now I am ordered to fall back to Tcherkeskuey to cover the army that has been withdrawn right back to Tchataldja."

"And what of the Seventeenth Army Corps, Excellency?"

"As far as I know, there is no Seventeenth Army Corps. We have all believed in it. We have all been told that it was coming to our help. Mahmud Muktear Pasha held on to Bunar Hissar expecting it. Torgad Shevket was driven to make a counter attack in order to give time to it to come up. It has proved a fantasy. The Redif units of which it was to be formed were never properly concentrated and they consisted for the most part of untrained troops. As they came up the magnetism of battle absorbed them in every direction, mostly to the rear."

"What of the First Army Corps, Excellency?" The old man as he answered got up from his seat, thereby indicating that the interview was shortly to be closed. "Don't speak to me of the First Army Corps. It is their half trained intellectuals that lost me the battle of Lule Burgas."

As he shook hands with the Centurion, he added,

"What do you propose to do?"

"With your permission, Excellency, I will stay with you as long as I may."

"We shall be enchanted for you to stay with us as long as you like. Perhaps you would like an escort?"

"There is no need, Excellency, for an escort. With the Turkish Army I am *chez-moi.*" The old man smiled as he said on parting, "You pay us a great compliment; it is true no escort is necessary."

The Centurion went back to his commandeered house to find that he had two unexpected visitors. These were Jamal Bey, a

civilian volunteer, and Ismail Hakki Effendi, a cavalry officer with whom the Centurion had been intimate during the Albanian campaigns. Jamal Bey was a friend from Constantinople who, flushed with patriotic enthusiasm, had volunteered for service. Owing to his capabilities he had been attached to the signalling staff of the unfortunate First Army Corps. Before he left Constantinople, the Centurion had arranged with him for a service of information. During the disastrous retreat of the First Corps, Jamal Bey had contracted a bad attack of dysentery. He had crawled into Tchorlu the evening of the day the Centurion had left for Rodosto.

Herein lay further evidence of the vein of bad luck in the Centurion's calendar. Jamal, in drawing the han for him, had fallen into the net of a rival, who had pumped him dry. The poor fellow was now almost at death's door and the Centurion insisted that he should immediately lie up in the commandeered house until he himself could take him in the car to

some place where adequate medical treatment was available.

Ismail Hakki, however, was in the best of health and spirits as far as a Turkish officer could be in spirits at this period of their unfortunate campaign. He had an independent troop of cavalry attached to the divisional headquarters, and since the battle of Lule Burgas, had been employed by the divisional commander as an officer's patrol. He had come in on the previous evening, and hearing that the Centurion was at the han, had come down to invite him to accompany him that afternoon when he went out with a new patrol. Ismail Hakki, like Ahmed Abouk Pasha, the corps commander, was a Circassian. He was one of the few Turkish officers who had done military training in France. He was a thorough soldier, imbued with the keenest intelligence and a constructive cavalry genius. The Centurion jumped at the offer. He had no horse, but Ismail offered him a troop horse.

As Ismail's patrol rode out of Tchorlu early

in the afternoon, the Centurion felt the fascination of again being a mounted swashbuckler. They had given him the best horse to be found in the troop, a great rakish Hungarian with a mouth of iron and heart of steel. Ismail took only six men with him. He had but fourteen horses fit for duty and he was wise enough to use them in relays. His men were tough looking fellows. Riding in their overcoats with their carbines slung across their shoulders they looked like Cossacks. Ismail's information was that there were Bulgarians at Seidler Station and at Ciflikkuey. Salih Pasha's cavalry division should have been on the line of the Ergene River, somewhere in the vicinity of Karahansankuey. The orders were for the patrol, if possible, to work round to the west of Seidler and discover if there was any movement behind the Bulgarian advance guard. Ismail's orders gave him permission to remain out twenty-four hours, after which he was to report back at Tchorlu to the headquarters of the cavalry division and then

rejoin his own divisional headquarters, which would by then have fallen back in the direction of Tcherkeskuey.

As the horses were sufficiently fresh, the patrol moved rapidly to the Ergene River, passing along the high ground that overlooked Muradli Station. A couple of troopers who were detached for the purpose reported Muradli Station to be in the same deserted condition that it had been two days before when the Centurion visited it. Seeing no evidence of their own cavalry division at the point on the Ergene at which he selected to cross, it was necessary for Ismail to proceed with some caution as he approached Seidler. Crossing the railway line at Inanti, the patrol moved cautiously, parallel to the railway line and river, up towards Seidler village.

The village is some three miles south of the railway station. The scouts who went on ahead reported all clear, and the patrol trotted in amongst the ramshackle houses. At first it seemed as if the village was entirely deserted.

It was marked in the intelligence report as being chiefly occupied by Greeks. This proved to be the case, as at its northern end were found the houses of two or three substantial Greek farmers. These men and their families were all at home. There was also in the place a small posse of mustafiz.

It was now almost dark and Ismail, being wise enough not to bivouac in the village, especially in which there were Greek inhabitants, just remained long enough to drag with the aid of the mustafiz as much information as was possible out of the Greeks. The Greeks were at first a little reluctant to talk. Ismail's treatment of them might perhaps be considered a little rough, but with the aid of the butt ends of the mustafiz' Martinis, he learned that a patrol of Servian cavalry visited the village that morning, that it came from Seidler station and had gone back there. One of the mustafiz also said that a Greek, who had come from the direction of Lule Burgas, passed through Ciflikkuey, and had seen there a num-

ber of mounted men. He had not said whether they were Servians or Bulgarians. The patrol moved out of Seidler, and Ismail with the cunning that he had acquired in France, moved out in the opposite direction to that which he intended to follow to find his bivouac. After he felt he was out of earshot of the village, Ismail changed his direction and moved to the back of a hill that commanded both Seidler village and the station. Here the patrol ran into a shepherd driving home a flock of belated sheep. This man was a Turkish Bulgar. He was immediately seized and, perhaps, a little roughly handled to put him in the necessary obedient frame of mind. He was then instructed to lead the patrol to some place in the vicinity where it could make a convenient bivouac. He was led to understand that if his memory failed, he would cease to be a shepherd pretty d—d quick.

After an extremely short march, he led the patrol to an ideal spot. There was an empty

kind of sheep pen and stone penthouse, with a spring quite close, the water from which had not yet frozen sufficiently hard to prevent the horses from watering. As soon as the horses were tied up in the corral, Ismail, the Centurion and his Choush (troop sergeant) climbed to the top of the hill to select a spot for the posting of a night sentry. The night outlook from this point of vantage confirmed the information that had been gleaned in the village. There were a number of fires blazing in the vicinity both of Seidler Station and Cliflikkuey, and further away to the north little twinkling points of light suggested that there were other troops bivouacking above Karisdiran, but these latter were so distant that they might have been only the usual village lights.

Having instructed the Choush where to post the night sentry, Ismail and the Centurion returned to make themselves as comfortable as the cold would permit. Already the troopers had pulled a rafter out of the penthouse and

had a fire blazing under the mask of the south side of the corral. There is something very brotherly in the intercourse between officers and men in the Turkish service. It must also be remembered that amongst Mohammedans all men are equal in the eyes of God. This philosophy leads to an intimate intercourse between all ranks which could hardly be understood by those used to the European methods of enforced discipline.

With the exception of the night sentry, the whole party grouped themselves in a semicircle round the fire and proceeded to participate in the evening meal. This consisted simply of rough bread and water. Ismail himself had nothing better, but the Centurion had three tins of cheap sardines in his haversack. These he at once produced. Turkish politeness forbids, that in like circumstances, gifts should be accepted from a guest. It was only by the most vehement insistence that the Centurion could induce these rough brigand-like looking soldiers to partake of this relish

to their simple meal and to dip morsels of their bread in the oil of the sardines. The Bulgarian shepherd also did not escape attention. As he had produced an adequate bivouac, he was admitted to the fraternity of the camp fire, and was also provided with bread and a sardine from the common stock. The only precaution taken with him was that his right wrist was bound securely to the left wrist of one of the troopers.

It was a bitter cold night. Mercifully there was no wind. Although he was clad in a sheepskin, it was far too bitter for the Centurion to think of sleep. In short, it was an all-night sitting, and the monotony was only broken by the periodical relief of the night sentry. Ismail Hakki opened his heart to the Centurion during the weary watches. He traced most of the evil misfortunes that had overtaken the Turks to the part the army had taken in the revolution. He said that the whole country had gone to pieces because the people did not know to whom to extend their

loyalty. He suggested that if Abdul Hamid had been left at the head of the State this fearful debâcle would not have overtaken the Empire. For this line of argument he had two reasons. The first was that the old man was so clever in the fields of diplomacy that he would never have permitted the Balkan Alliance. By some means or other, by the gift of Crete here, or economic concessions elsewhere, he would have detached one or another of the allies. The second was more intimate. The old man had exercised an influence and control over the army which had found no substitute under the new régime. It may be that Ismail himself believed that there was more general pilfering of public funds and jobbery under the Hamidan régime than with the advent of the Constitution, but there was that factor of personal control by the Sultan, which in a moment of emergency welded the army together. Some subtle force in his authority produced results that were beyond the powers of the new General Staff. It did not matter

how these results were effected; if Abdul Hamid's Irade went forth there was an impetus that somehow carried them through. If Abdul Hamid had been in power there would have been no failure of food at Lule Burgas or shortage of ammunition. Ismail Hakki felt the situation keenly. Although not a Turk in the true sense of the word, he had a large share of the traditional *amour propre* of the nation. From the bottom of his heart he cursed the Young Turks and all their works. Nor was he singular in this feeling. The Centurion, as he extended his circle of acquaintances amongst the Turkish officers, found there were many who thought like his Circassian friend.

Ismail was also inclined to be bitter at the handling of the independent cavalry division. He did not wish to be disloyal to his chief, but realising how the division would be led in the field, he made a personal application that resulted in his detachment from the independent cavalry division to those duties in which

Turkish cavalry

the Centurion found him. He traced the indifferent handling of the cavalry to the German instructors. "If you want to know anything about cavalry in Europe," he said, his eyes gleaming in the light of the logs with the fire of the true cavalryman, "you should not go to Germany but to France. Cavalry work is not in our days a matter of weight and masses! It is a question of *finesse*. No German understands *finesse,* while every Frenchman is an adept in it. Look what has happened to our cavalry here in this campaign. It has all the time been bundled about from place to place on the pretence that it was looking for an opportunity to charge the enemy. Where do you find an enemy's cavalry? Is it behind your own infantry? What has Salih Pasha done with his fine division? In twenty days of war, he has reduced its effectives by fifty per cent. Does he ever spare his horses? The men rarely dismount during the day and have never off-saddled at night. How has he done protection duties? Has he detached in-

dependent squadrons while he was resting the remainder of his forces? Has he ever practised his men in defending or taking a position dismounted? I know that he has not. It can almost be said that these men do not know how to dismount or to unsling their carbines. He has been content to work his horses to death, up hill and down dale well out of range of any circumstances that could be turned into military utility."

This is a scathing criticism. The Centurion did not know how far Ismail was justified in placing the responsibility with the German instructors. The question is whether these German instructors had had an opportunity of really instructing the Turks. Is it possible to break down the inveterate conceit of the Tartar mind and make it receptive of instruction? Did the German officers set about their duties with enthusiasm, or were they just wasters from the Prussian service attracted by the shimmer of piastres? These are questions which the Centurion was not competent to an-

swer, but he could endorse every word of the strictures which Ismail passed upon the independent cavalry division that finally marched through the Tchataldja lines and was sent to recuperate at the Sweet Waters. The veterinary hospital at Daud Pasha was a sight warranted to break most cavalrymen's hearts. The Turkish horse soldier, officer and man, knows nothing and cares less about horse mastership.

Thus the night was passed. In the last bitter hour before dawn the horses were fed with the last bite of corn remaining in the nosebags. The patrol then set out to glean some definite information with regard to the camp fires they had located the previous evening. Nor had they far to go, since it was soon light enough to make out the surroundings of Seidler Station. It was seen that at least a regiment of cavalry was standing to its horses. At the same moment the nearest outpost that had covered the bivouac, opened fire on the patrol. It was a foolish thing to do, as it gave Ismail time to get away before any of the

enemy were in a position really to interfere with him.

The patrol fell back rapidly due west, then getting into the folds of the downs, climbed up a formidable ridge that overlooked Kajabali. From this point Ismail secured all the information that was necessary. He was in an unapproachable position, as any attempt to turn him or force him out could be seen for a radius of five miles. The panorama gave a sweep of the entire Ciflikkuey-Karisdiran valley. There seemed to be a cavalry regiment moving out of Karisdiran, while on the main Lule Burgas road was bivouacked a force of all arms which, by counting the artillery park, was estimated at the strength of a division.

At last the Bulgarians were making their forward movement. Ismail was quick-witted enough soldier to see that he had accomplished his mission. It was his duty to get back to Tchorlu in the shortest possible time. The patrol returned by much the same route as it had come and was back in Tchorlu village just

after midday. Here a great change had taken place. Hakki Pasha's division with all its impedimenta had disappeared. Its place had been taken by the independent cavalry which at this time was reduced by the wastage of war to about the strength of a single regiment.

## CHAPTER XI

### STILL SHIRKING

WHEN the Centurion got back to his commandeered house, he found still another surprise in store for him. He found the General in possession. It will be remembered that he and the Diplomat had last seen the General when they were in the car on their way back from the battle of Lule Burgas. The General was delighted to find a pal. He had had a desperate time of it. After they had left him he had caught up Salih Pasha's cavalry division and, being hospitably received, had attached himself to the Pasha and had remained his guest ever since. Once he came back to Tchorlu to get something to eat, since existence with the cavalry had proved almost synonymous with starvation. The General had been back in the village just at the period when the organisation of the latter-

day adventurers had broken up. He was, therefore, able to give the Centurion more definite news than the latter had gleaned from the excited Frenchman. It appeared that all the foreigners had been suddenly ordered to "footsack" from the front. By this time the English section of the Bosniak Shepherd's flock were absolutely desperate, and on receipt of these orders they had vanished to the four winds. He himself, having been made an honorary member of the cavalry division, had no intention of going back to the base, and had slipped off to the front again.

He was able to give the Centurion news of his own caravan and John. It appeared that the General had found John in the han in the last state of despair. He had had one of the Centurion's horses commandeered; he had been captured by the bibulous Bey and ordered under threat of instant execution on no account to wait longer at Tchorlu and he was without funds or orders. In the circumstances the General came to his rescue and lent him

£15. Thereupon John had collected the caravan and marched south with the retreating army.

As far as the General knew, the majority of the English adventurers had also ridden south. Some had gone to the coast in the direction of Siliviri. It was the General's intention to continue to follow the fortunes of the cavalry division. This the Centurion believes he subsequently did, for he was reported missing for a long time, until it was discovered that he had been taken prisoner by the Bulgarians and spirited away to Kirk Kilisse.

As the Centurion learnt at Tchorlu that the cavalry division's orders were to fall back the moment the Bulgarians showed any sign of advancing in force, and as what he had seen with Ismail's patrol convinced him that this advancing force was less than twenty-four hours distant, he considered that he would be cutting it rather fine if he remained longer in Tchorlu. The choice was open to him of taking the car down the Adrianople road in the track of the

main army, or of returning to Rodosto and shipping the car from that port to Constantinople.

The Centurion argued that if he returned by the Adrianople road, he would be much impeded by the impedimenta on the march and he would also run the risk of falling into the hands of the Bosniak Shepherd at Tcherkeskuey or Tchataldja. Knowing as he did the orders that had been received by the commander of the Fourth Corps, it was obvious that even with the best will in the world and the utmost energy, there could be no fighting at Tchataldja for at least ten days. There might be, however, most interesting developments if the Bulgarians followed the example of the Russians in their campaign and made Rodosto their first point of contact with the Marmora. He, therefore, decided upon the Rodosto road and instructed the now very sick Jamal to be ready to make the journey at daybreak on the following morning. Jamal somewhat demurred because it was stated in

his hospital certificate that he was to proceed to Hademkuey for treatment. The Centurion told him frankly that if he went down by cart to Hademkuey he would be dead in forty-eight hours. He pointed out that his only chance was to come down to Rodosto, where he could get medical attendance, and then take the first ship to Constantinople to be nursed in his own home. One or two friends from the cavalry division who came in to see him in the afternoon, also endorsed this view and prevailed upon him to accept the Centurion's advice.

There was some difficulty in getting the sick man away in the morning early. Besides, the Centurion wanted to satisfy himself that Salih Pasha really intended evacuating Tchorlu. The Pasha was some time making up his mind and finally said that he would not begin his rearward movement until the enemy reached the Karahasankuey ridge.

The Centurion, realising the easy way there was round to the southwest of the village, determined not to chance any untoward develop-

ment. He watched the cavalry division bring its solitary battery of horse artillery into position on the high ground near Tchorlu station. Satisfying himself that the demolitions which had been effected were of sufficient extent to delay the enemy, and transferring the sick Jamal from the house to the car, he started on what was to prove an adventurous journey back to Rodosto.

There is one beauty of the Thracian soil as viewed from the standpoint of the motorist. The result of rain soon vanishes, except in the bottom of the valleys. After three days the going on the Rodosto road was moderately good again. The car made the journey at an average speed without adventure until half the distance had been covered. Here at the top of a rather steep rise is the village of Hadzi Muradli. The climb up to this village is severe, but once the ridge is passed a long gentle decline faces the traveller for nearly six miles before he meets the last big ridges which lie between him and the sea.

The car was just beginning to make the ascent up to the village, when, at the bottom of the valley, about three miles away to the right, the Centurion observed five horsemen. There was something suspicious about the attitude of these horsemen. They were halted. With the naked eye it looked as if they were grouped in astonished observation of the car. The Centurion pointed them out to Hamdi, who, throwing the quick eye of the accomplished chauffeur in their direction, murmured the word "Bulgar."

The Centurion turned round and saw that Jamal was half somnolent in the back seat. At the very moment that Hamdi made his diagnosis the horsemen started to gallop at a slanting angle up the ridge. Their direction showed that it was their intention to cut the car off before it reached the summit.

"You are right, Hamdi," said the Centurion, "those are Bulgars. Give her all you can." Hamdi's only reply was the monosyllable "Pump, pump." This referred to the Dur-

kopp system which required the passenger seated beside the driver to pump petrol up into the feed pipe when any special effort was wanted on a hillside.

Many years had practised the Centurion in estimating distances. The Bulgars had two miles of up-hill to gallop on horses that were probably tired. The car had about half a mile of stiff climb in front of her. She was doing her best, and she was a kind car; but a hillside was her weak point. The Centurion could see that it was going to be a close thing. Hamdi, who was staunch to the backbone, set his teeth and nursed his engine up that hill yet, pump the Centurion never so rapidly, the beat of the engine became slower and slower. To the Centurion it seemed that the car was only crawling. Already the horsemen had covered half the distance. There remained what seemed to be an interminable height of road in front. The time was past for exclamations. Hamdi, from moment to moment, cast a quick glance to his right. As the machine crawled

slowly on it seemed that the horsemen were certain to overtake her. The Centurion looked anxiously back at Jamal. He was lying back peacefully unconscious of the danger that was threatening him. Jamal, dressed in his volunteer uniform was a heavy dead weight to the Centurion at that moment. The presence of a Turkish soldier in uniform in the car would be difficult of explanation when they fell into the hands of the enemy.

There was nothing now that Hamdi could do to get a better pace out of his engine. Already the Centurion could hear the chafing of strained leather and the heavy breathing of the pursuers' horses. "Thank God the horses are blown," was his mental conjecture. There only remained now about thirty yards to climb, and yet it was the steepest of them all. Moreover the car was moving so slowly that it almost seemed to be stationary.

Shouts from the pursuers were now audible. They were yelling to the car to stop. Five yards more and the car began to feel the level

of the summit. She was picking up. The Centurion gave one look round. He could see the whites of the eyes of his flat-capped pursuers. In less time than it takes to write it the crest was collared and passed. As if by magic the car picked up impetus, felt her power, and was dashing down the slope. Five miles of this pace and all pursuit on horseback was unthinkable. There remained the rifles. The Centurion cared nothing for the rifles of men who for two miles had been riding an up-hill finish.

Never had Hamdi driven as he now drove the car down that incline. It was not a metalled way. In places she simply bounded from rut to rut; she swayed backwards and forwards, now on two wheels, and now on one. The wretched Jamal, knowing nothing of the reason for the haste that had so rudely broken his slumbers complained weakly of the pace from somewhere in the hood to which he was now clinging. A mile below the summit there was a temporary plank-bridge across a

*sluit.* Hamdi remembered it, but he dare not touch his brakes. The bridge was a rotten affair and its breadth was barely more than the span of the car. Hamdi set his teeth as he swerved her on to it. She slithered, then leapt like a springbok, and, God only knows how, was over. The planks cracked and fell away behind her.

Once over the bridge the Centurion turned round to see if the pursuit was pressed. The Bulgars had given it up though they were busily dismounting and disengaging their carbines for action. The Centurion never knew if they fired, for at the pace Hamdi took the car down the remaining five miles of slope, the immediate circumstances were far more terrifying than the chance bullets of indifferent riflemen whose hearts must have been pumping a full twelve to the dozen.

An hour later the car was descending into Rodosto town. It was observed that there were now three Turkish warships lying in the roadstead.

As the car rounded the bend that brings the road into the town, one of the warships in the Bay fired a heavy gun. For the moment the Centurion thought that a warning shot had been fired against the car. Then Hamdi suggested in his nonchalant way that it was probably the midday gun. As, however, the sound of a shell bursting well inland followed his remark, it was evident that the gun was fired by the Turkish sailors against some target in the direction of the Muradli road.

The Centurion returned to Rodosto to find the township convulsed with another of those paroxysms of terror which periodically seized upon it during the period that the Bulgarians were expected. As soon as the car was lodged in the han, he made his way to the British Vice Consul. The firing of that one shot by the Turkish battleship had put the nerves of the whole town on edge. The story that the Vice Consul had to tell was that the Kaimakam had gone on board one of the Turkish ships and had resigned the conduct of munici-

pal affairs to a Board of Christian residents. Early that morning, villagers had come in with information that a mixed force of Bulgarians and Servians was three miles out on the Muradli road, and that the commandant had summoned the town to surrender.

The leading Levantine residents, advised by the senior Greek ecclesiastic, had, therefore, taken upon themselves to go out and interview the invaders. Four of them, dressed in their Sunday best, had hired a phaeton and had proceeded along the Muradli road to implore the Bulgarians not to press matters in the confines of the town, as they had certain information that if any such attack was made, the Turkish warships would bombard the town.

When the Centurion reached the town, these worthies had not yet returned from their mission. As far as other news was concerned, the Vice Consul reported that nearly all the military stores had now been removed; that the town was practically cleared of soldiers; the gendarmerie had whipped up all the fugi-

tive refugee deserters, while a couple of Turkish boats had been sent to begin the transport of refugees across to Asia.

The Centurion himself was very little concerned with the affairs of Rodosto, his one object was to find a steamer sailing for Constantinople that would take his car back to the capital. He handed this business over to the Vice Consul who was also agent for the leading shipping firm in the Levant.

Shortly after midday the reason of the shot fired by the Turkish battleship was disclosed. Four very frightened and out of breath parlementaires returned from an abortive mission to open up communications with the enemy. It seems that after the Kaimakam had retired from his duties on shore, the Turkish naval commandant was informed that the Christian Levantines had started their deputation to carry "bread and salt" to the invaders. Under martial law, the naval commandant, being a post captain, was *ipse facto,* in both chief military and naval command of the town.

Not unnaturally, he resented the attitude of these weak-kneed Christians in toddling out to endeavour to make arrangements with the enemy. He, therefore, when his signalmen saw their phaeton toiling up the Muradli road, ordered a persuasive round to be fired in front of them. There never was a quorum of men who more quickly took a hint. The shell burst about half a mile beyond their carriage. The horses were immediately put about and brought back to the town at the best pace their sorry condition would permit. In reality, it is doubtful if any Bulgarian officer of sufficient rank was there to demand the surrender of the town, or yet within twenty miles of Rodosto. It is probable that one of the bands which were doing *eclairage* for the Bulgarian General Staff, and predatory missions for themselves, had hoodwinked the peasants, who brought the news, with some cock-and-bull story about their strength and demands.

The advent of the Turkish warships and the putting ashore of a strong naval landing party

had worked wonders in the commercial quarter of the town. The Centurion had no hesitation in saying that out of all the Turkish services with which he came in contact during the war, the only one that showed any approximation to a European standard of smartness and address was the Navy. Both officers and blue-jackets of the landing party were smartly turned out. The moment they were put ashore, they mounted sentries over all the Government material remaining in the military department yards. They picketed the main thoroughfares of the town. There was no doubt that the naval officers, as long as they were ashore, intended to control all matters that appertained to this final embarkation of the Government stores. It is not saying too much to suggest that this very marked difference in the efficiency of the Navy as compared with the system existing in the army, is entirely due to the British naval instructors attached to that service.

The naval commandant intended, as long

as he was carrying on his embarkation duties, to keep the enemy at a distance with his heavy ordnance. In order that his gun firing might be accurately directed, parties of bluejackets were landed and sent to observation points on the summits of the hills that command the town. Here the telegraphic wires were adapted to the portable telephones that the sailors brought with them and the observation posts connected up with the military pier from which point the messages were semaphored to the ships. The difference in executive capacity between the two services was here brought into strong relief, for the Centurion had seen the army in the field without telephonic communication of any kind. Even though telephones were lying idle with the reserves, the officers in the firing line were absolutely without means of learning what was happening on either flank.

Although perfect order was maintained at the Military Pier, yet no attempt was made to regulate affairs at the commercial wharves.

The firing of that signal shot from the flagship was responsible for another wild rush to the waterside. The Centurion had never believed that such epidemics of panic could seize upon a populace. For days the commercial jetties had been packed tight with crowds of refugees, who, camped on the quays, were content to await the arrival of some vessel to take them across the water. The apprehensions raised by the report of the big naval gun roused this hitherto placid medley into a state of frenzy. To them was added a wild rush of the townfolk. The scenes on the jetty were pathetic without parallel. The Greek boatmen knew the value of their services. They paddled their boats away from the landing stages and drove outrageous bargains with the frenzied crowd. This miserable picture was not confined to those of the poorer classes. Well born and gently nurtured Turkish ladies, forgetting the traditions of the harem, bareheaded and wild-eyed, beat their breasts or clasped the rough knees of the boatmen in

their frantic terror. Rude men hustled these cringing beauties from their path as they dragged their screaming children to the ships. Boatmen slashed at the crowd with their oars to beat a passage for those who would pay their exorbitant demands. When a boat drew to the quay-side demented mothers would cast their infants into the mass crowding the thwarts, and then leap blindly after them. Many were roughly pushed into the water and left to drown unless their rescue was worth a price. It was unbelievable that men could be such brutes; but the Levantine Greek has no soul if there be money in the scale.

That night the Centurion enjoyed the hospitality of the Vice Consul. The arrival of the express packet from Constantinople brought a surprise. On board the little steamer were Jew's Harp Senior and the Dumpling. They had come ostensibly to retrieve their Panhard. It is conceivable, however, that they were, professionally speaking, concerned at the long absence of the Cen-

turion. They were full of information. In the first place they had covered themselves with journalistic glory. Having caught the Austrian packet, as has been described, they immediately took ship at Constantinople for Constanza. There on neutral ground they had settled down to write and despatch the long and graphic cables that had made each famous. They both had received congratulatory messages from their papers. None deserved this more than the Jew's Harp. He had taken inordinate risks and had suffered the utmost privations at Lule Burgas.

The information they had brought of the other adventurers was instructive. They were nearly all back again in Pera. The Bosniak Shepherd was at his wits' end. He said that he could manage the Frenchmen and the Germans, and even the Russians, but the Englishmen were beyond his power. He washed his hands of them.

The news from the various seats of war was astounding. The military reputation of the

Ottoman Army had come tumbling down like a pack of cards. The Greeks were on the point of taking Salonika. The despised Servians had defeated Ali Riza Pasha and were not only in occupation of Uskub, but were marching triumphantly through Albania to the sea. The only bright spots upon the Turkish horizon were the garrisons of Adrianople, Scutari and Yanina. Beleaguered fortresses, however, even if they do make a gallant resistance, are, at the best, but a sorry consolation for loss of territory and reputation. In three weeks Turkey had lost by right of hostile conquest her European provinces, almost in their entirety. The thing was too stupendous to be readily believed.

It is not difficult to find the reasons for this unprecedented debâcle. They may be conveniently divided under two heads. These are inefficient administration and inadequately trained material.

On both these vital questions, this trouble in the Near East presents to military students an

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Turkish veteran infantrymen

object lesson of far greater importance than any campaign that has happened since the Franco-German war. There was much to be learned from the Manchurian campaign, but the elements there engaged were more or less equal, from the point of view of armies organised on the basis of national service.

Taking the first head, the lessons of the Russo-Japanese war demonstrated a triumph in staff direction, backed by a technically-trained and splendidly-led professional army. It has already been shown in the present narrative how the administrative incapacity paralysed the entire system of the Ottoman resistance. As far as the English nation may hope to profit by the lessons of this truly remarkable Balkan war there is not much that we need take to heart in the matter of army administration. The competent military authorities of the British Empire have long ago realised, and as far as national acquiescence in their views has permitted, have strained every nerve to bring up to date the administrative depart-

ments of the army. That the scope allowed to them is small, is no reflection upon the Imperial General Staff. As an observer of some experience, the Centurion is of the opinion, that for its size, the British Army is as well administered as any in the world. Taking the South African war as an example, the administrative faculty of the nation was admirably demonstrated. This, it must be remembered, was at a period before the modern requirements in warfare had been truly estimated. In spite of the fact that the administrative machinery was only designed to cater for an army of 50,000 men and had to be expanded to deal with a situation utilising five times this number, the British army in South Africa was without doubt the best rationed, clothed, and administered army of any size that has ever taken the field in the history of war. This view being accepted, and the General Staff having profited by the stupendous experiences of the Boer war, there is no reason to doubt that, given national support and ade-

quate material, the capabilities of the British army on an administrative basis should be unrivalled.

It is not necessary, therefore, to deduce lessons on this head from the experiences in the Near East, further than to remark that they have endorsed to the full every instructional theory that has been put forward by the British General Staff in its unsupported struggle towards efficiency during recent years.

When, however, we come to the other head, we are upon the fringe of an enormous, and it may be said, a vital question for the British Empire. The Turks in the consummate conceit bred of their congenital stupidity believed that because they had been able to overthrow their own reigning dynasty by force of arms, they were competent to handle any military contingency that might arise. With Tartar obstinacy they were content to stake their all upon their hereditary traditions as a fighting race, garnished with the modern appliances that could be purchased in the best arsenals

of the world. In the immediate circumstances of the menace of the Balkan Allies, they had been actuated by a sublime contempt for the virile neighbours that had at one time been their vassals. They plumed themselves in the stupid belief that as a fighting race they possessed some occult superiority before which their Balkan enemies were bound to crumble. In this belief they were encouraged, how sincerely it is not known, by some of the best military thought in Europe.

In this spirit of confidence they fell into the error which is so common in nations where self-confidence is a malady: that given a small steel-point of efficiently trained troops, it is possible to fill up numbers with the partially trained; that after the first clash of arms, given a martial race, there is time and opportunity to fashion the pig iron behind the first line into serviceable steel.

Never was there a greater fallacy. Never in the history of war has the danger of employing inefficiently trained and indifferently

officered troops been more poignantly demonstrated. Take, for instance, the pathetic picture of the defeat of the left wing of the Turkish armies in Thrace. Here you had the First Army Corps and the Fourth Army Corps with the initial nucleus of their battalions formed by the inclusion of all their first-class Redifs. These were the only soldiers of any quality in the Empire. This *ban* of Redifs had practically been absorbed into the first line owing to the many difficulties in which the Ottoman Empire had been embroiled, since the Young Turks had entered on their fatal endeavour to run the Constitutional steam-roller over the Empire's many dissenting nationalities.

These skeleton battalions had to be brought up to strength, not only by enrolment of second class reservists with but a shadow of training, but also with men who had been taught the manual exercise and the goose step for the first time within a fortnight of their marching to meet the enemy. What was the result?

At the first demonstration of faulty tactical leading with its attendant punishment, these undisciplined soldiers forgot the hereditary qualities of their fathers, forgot their vaunted courage as a fighting race, and casting away their arms, fled like a herd of harried sheep from the exaggerated terrors of the enemy they had led themselves to believe that they despised.

What was the effect of this panic? These wild-eyed fugitives came herding into the battalions of another army corps, a corps that had not yet been put to the test of fighting, but was already suffering the rigours of campaigning and the privations consequent upon mal-administration. The sequel was humiliating. They communicated the panic to the ranks of this army corps. They vitiated control and carried with them in their flight the inexperienced and untrained soldiers who, like themselves, were lacking in that co-ordination that can only be acquired by a systematic and

"At the first demonstration of faulty tactical leading with its attendant punishment, these undisciplined soldiers . . . fled like a herd of harried sheep from the exaggerated terrors of the enemy they had led themselves to believe that they despised"

rigorous discipline. The reader has only to turn back to the heartfelt complaint of the commander of the Fourth Corps, to realise how impossible it is to think of making war against disciplined armies with immature material, be it ever so courageous and its traditions what they may.

Why was it that the body of foreign observers who joined in the retreat of the Ottoman army to Tchataldja, returned to Constantinople in the belief that they had participated in a rout? It was not because the Nizam minority had stood firm and had adequately covered the retirement of this rabble. It was because the Ottoman army, composed so largely of untrained troops and so inadequately officered, became disintegrated.

There is a trenchant lesson in this pathetic history to all self-confident nations, who like the British people and the citizens of the United States of America think, in modern conditions, that it is possible hurriedly to de-

velop the raw fighting material of the nation behind a small highly trained professional army. Let the writer force upon those optimistic theorists who persist in the advocacy of this fallacy, that there is nothing more dangerous in the world than the belief that a small leaven of men experienced in the arts of war can, upon an emergency, immediately create from the masses of the people, armies that are competent to cross bayonets with an instructed foe. The machinery of modern war will plough through the armies thus improvised with the same irresistible ease as the share of the steam plough turns its furrows. There is no short cut to military efficiency. The nation which, like the Turk, believes that it can improvise at the eleventh hour, will as surely suffer its battles of Yenidje and Lule Burgas. It will be fortunate, if like the Turks, it has in front of it an enemy as devoid of national resources and competency for sustaining war as were the Balkan Allies. These are not the thoughts of a visionary who has just partici-

pated in a first campaign. They are the convictions of one, who, not devoid of military training, has for twenty years had an unexampled opportunity of studying modern armies in the field.

## CHAPTER XII

### A COUPLE AND A HALF

THE last day in Rodosto was without interest to the three adventurers. It was quite hopeless to attempt to get the cars away. Everyone dealing with the question of shipping was absolutely paralysed. Furthermore, there was no boat. Towards midday the consular corps received news from certain villagers that the Bulgarians were really at the gates. This was confirmed at noon when, without warning, the battleships in the roadstead opened a sustained shell fire in the direction of the Muradli road. Adjectives fail to describe the scene that ensued. There was a desperate rush of terrified women, white-jawed men and screaming children to the various consulates. This pathetic crowd invaded all the consular buildings and were herded into cellars. It was futile for the Centurion

and his companions to assure the consuls and their subjects that this gun fire was innocuous; that the shells were directed at a target at least five or six miles distant from the town. The deafening crack of the big weapons, the reverberating boom of bursting projectiles and the vibration, were quite sufficient to the lay mind to give the lie to any assurance that the adventurers might make.

In the early afternoon it was evident that the Bulgars proposed serious operations against the town. There are vineyards and mulberry groves on the slopes that lead up to the heights that command Rodosto. Rifle fire in the suburbs of the town showed that hostile infantry was working through these plantations. It was also quite evident that the Turks had no intention of holding the town against any systematic attack by other means than the guns of the battleships in the roadstead. To all intents and purposes the residue of the military stores had been removed. The only military force remaining to question

the Bulgarian advance was a single weak battalion and the gendarmerie. These had orders to withdraw as soon as it was dark on to a waiting transport. The Bulgarians, however, never pressed any attack. Apparently they were only feeling to ascertain the nature of resistance they might expect if they were to advance seriously.

Towards evening a small French steamer that was bound for Constantinople that night arrived in the roadstead. The adventurers agreed that it was time to desert Rodosto even at the price of jettisoning the motor cars. These were, therefore, left in the care of the British Vice Consul. The adventurers packed up such small kits as they had and started to embark. This was no easy matter as the naval commandant had issued orders that nobody was to approach the jetty. The streets leading to the landing stage were picketed and the adventurers were brought up standing at every exit by the muzzles of vicious-looking rifles. There were, fortunately,

other ways of reaching the landing stage. By passing through back doors and courtyards and climbing walls and penetrating the precincts of the customs house, the three Englishmen at last reached the landing stage. Here there was an officer with whom they could discuss their intentions. It was dark by the time that they could induce this officer to let them embark or to permit a hired boat to come alongside the military shed. Then by good chance there arrived an officer who had been intimate with Jew's Harp Senior at Abdullah's headquarters during the battle of Lule Burgas. It is wonderful how far a little sympathetic intercourse will go with the Turkish gentleman. This new arrival, as far as could be gathered, had nothing to do with the regulations that ruled the port. Nevertheless he rose superior to all objections and immediately summoned a boat. He, personally, superintended the departure of the three Englishmen, their servants and the still very sick Jamal. The packet was lying rather far out and it was

quite dark by the time the adventurers' shallop reached the steamer. Here they found themselves entangled in another extraordinary scene of panic. It appears that all the would-be fugitives from the town that could pay the exorbitant charges of the boatmen had found a means of evading the order of the captain of the man-of-war by embarking at a point lower down the coast just on the fringe of the town.

Shoals of boats were battling around the steamer. They were loaded to the gunwale with freights of terrified men and women striving for an opportunity to reach the gangway. Clustered round the gangway were a score of boats grinding their thwarts against each other. These were filled with a screaming, gesticulating mass of humanity. Men, women and children were clambering over each other like a swarm of bees in their frantic efforts to climb on board. The more agile had clambered up the ship's side and were hauling up their women folk and children by

"Shoals of boats were battling around the steamer"

their arms, whilst others, absolutely reckless of those beneath them, were jumping on to the shoulders of other hapless passengers who had already reached the gangway. The ship seemed to be packed to her utmost capacity. Her decks were thronged. It looked as if the adventurers would be crushed out.

The measures the three adventurers adopted may not have been gallant. They may not even have been quite manly, but the adventurers were of no value to their employers if they were captured by the Bulgarians in Rodosto. The Dumpling on these occasions was a man of instant resource. He whipped out his automatic pistol, knowing full well that it was on the safety catch, and made the boatmen give way. He then swung his portly frame on to the grating of the gangway and, pistol in hand, terrorised the crowd of fugitives until his own boat was alongside and cleared of all its contents. The adventurers were only just in time. The skipper of the packet, fearing disaster from overcrowding,

hauled up his anchor and steamed away without waiting for his papers. Of the discomforts of that night voyage to Constantinople, it is not necessary to furnish detail. Such nights are only minor incidents in the lives of latter-day adventurers.

When the adventurers arrived in Constantinople, they found a remarkable state of affairs existing in the capital. There has been much in the present story that has shown how prone the Levantine mind is to an exaggerated anxiety for the safety of the Christian communities. It must be supposed that there is some terror wound up in the traditions of this class that the ordinary European cannot readily appreciate and understand.

The adventurers arrived at Galata to find the whole of Pera picketed with sailors drawn from an international Naval Brigade landed from a squadron of foreign men-of-war lying in the Bosporus. It seemed that the Bulgarian General Staff, and the rather excited foreign correspondents who had

marched down to Tchataldja with the Turks, were responsible for the feeling of insecurity which had taken hold of Pera.

The Bulgarian General Staff, as has already been shown, employed a press agent falsely to instruct Europe, by way of Vienna, as to the course of the operations; while the more inexperienced amongst the war correspondents added weight to the Bulgarian falsehoods by describing the Turkish retirement as an indiscriminate rout. The foreign ambassadors in the Capital put their heads together and determined that the moment was opportune to place this final indignity of naval occupation upon the Turkish nation. It would have been more decent, and certainly more in keeping with the traditions of the European races, if this landing had been postponed until the Allies had forced the Turkish armies from Tchataldja. To those of the adventurers who like the Centurion and his two colleagues had been with the Turkish army, unarmed and unprotected, during the trying stresses of its

defeat, this attitude on the part of the diplomatic corps suggested a want of information and timidity altogether humiliating; humiliating alike to the ambassadors who acquiesced in the miserable supineness of the Constantinople Levantines, and to the Turkish nation, who had hitherto shown no incapacity in the maintenance of law and order in their capital. The Centurion did not profess to know anything about the paths of diplomacy, but it appeared to him that this action by the representatives of the powers was tantamount to inviting trouble by suggestion.

The returned adventurers found the majority of their colleagues comfortably installed in the Pera Palace Hotel. The narrative of their adventures since they left Tchorlu was interesting. It appears that the Bosniak Shepherd had seduced from Tchorlu all those who believed in him by the statement that, as there was a chance of interesting fighting in the direction of Viza-Sarai, it would be best for them to entrain part of the way to Tcher-

keskuey and from thence proceed to the front by road. The majority of the foreigners and a few Englishmen followed these instructions and were immediately spirited away to Constantinople. Here they were dumped on the platform and told by the Bosniak Shepherd that for the future he washed his hands of his charge.

Others, including the Diplomat, Jew's Harp Junior, the Popinjay and the cinematograph mongers, elected to make their own way down with the retreating forces. They appeared to have had a desperate time. Not only did the retreating Turkish army with the remorseless avidity of a swarm of locusts eat the country clean, but the epidemic of cholera that later almost decimated the army reached a high stage of virulence during the march down. These adventurers with the retreating army had believed that they were only taking the road as far as Tcherkeskuey. At Tcherkeskuey they found that the bulk of the troops were retiring still further to the

rear. They were then told that Karahanskuey was to be the new army headquarters. Here, however, there was no rest for them. Tchataldja was named as the next stage. At Tchataldja, the headquarters staff was found. As is well to be imagined, the headquarters staff of an army constituted as the Turkish army then was, was not over solicitous concerning a troop of foreign adventurers. They were given short shrift and told that their destination was Constantinople. Two or three of their number had been wise enough to give the General Staff a wide berth. These selected Siliviri as their *point d'appui* and some of them succeeded in rejoining the army. Two at least, including the General, fell into the hands of the enemy.

The individual story of the Innocent is worthy of being placed on record. He won his spurs in a truly heroic manner. During the first retirement from Lule Burgas, he became separated from the Bosniak Shepherd. At nightfall he found himself a lone Euro-

pean upon the open veldt amid the bivouacs of the retreating army. Being unversed in the matter of horses, but realising that it was necessary to do something in the way of picketing, he tied his reins to a wax candle and affixed the latter lightly in the ground. In the morning he was horseless. In delightful naïveté, he defended his action to his friends by intimating that he believed his old horse to have been sufficiently sagacious to have known the novel picketing peg was only a wax candle. Later in the retreat the Innocent marched into a Turkish bivouac and, not unnaturally, was taken for a Bulgarian agent. He suffered many indignities at the hands of the soldiers who captured him before an officer was found to release him from a really awkward predicament. Ultimately when he arrived at Tcherkeskuey, by an almost supernatural coincidence a station clerk was hawking a telegram up and down the platform. This telegram was for the Innocent. It was a pathetic whip from his office. Its contents

so played upon the feelings of the recipient that he set his teeth and plunged into the vortex of the re-organised Turkish advance guard. Undaunted by the dangers of his position he was determined to stick to that advance guard until it was pushed in by the advancing Bulgarians. He then hid himself in a village right in the centre of the lines of Tchataldja. Here his efforts were rewarded, for when the Bulgarians made their attack against the Lines on November 17th, the Innocent was able to be actually in the very thick of the engagement. None of his colleagues grudged him his success since of the whole of the corps of British adventurers he was the most deserving. It is no small thing for a man without experience in the field, to find himself suddenly associated with a retreating army.

After the Bosniak Shepherd had washed his hands of the entire bunch of adventurers, the General Staff issued an order that owing to the re-organisation of the Turkish forces behind the Tchataldja lines, no correspondents

would be allowed to proceed to the front. This meant that all conditions of service and all regulations were suspended and it was useless for any of the adventurers to apply for facilities. The members of the corps, therefore, ceased to be privileged adventurers. Those who determined to persevere, could only hope to do so as buccaneers and at their own risk.

It is a sufficient commentary upon the various statements which have been published concerning the Bulgarian successes at the battles of Lule Burgas and Viza and during the retirement down to Tchataldja, to note the wonderful rapidity with which this retreating army was re-organised behind the Tchataldja lines. It was not until November the 13th, that is 14 days after the last shots were fired in the vicinity of Lule Burgas, that the Bulgarian pursuing advance guard came in touch with the Turkish outposts in the neighbourhood of Tchataldja village. Nazim Pasha, the Minister of War, had now

taken supreme command and had established his headquarters at Hademkuey, a village on the railway, just south of the lines.

The Turkish generalissimo now disposed of about 80,000 men in his field army. This field army was re-organised into five corps. The old First and Second Corps were amalgamated and held the left section of the Lines; the Fourth Corps held the centre; while the Third Corps was on the right in the direction of Lake Derkos. In addition, two reserve corps had been organised and reinforcements were daily arriving from the Erzerum and the Syrian Inspections. Even the dull Turks had learned their lesson from the employment of partially trained troops. These new troops that were being brought from Asia Minor were composed entirely of Nizam and first class Redifs. They were not made up in any way by the inclusion of the material which had brought about ruin so rapidly in the earlier phases of the war. In fact stringent measures of elimination had been taken with

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The late Nazim Pasha, Turkish Minister of War and Commander-in-Chief of the Turkish Army

the troops of the original four corps of the field army. The untrained material was sent to the rear and formed into units to carry out the scheme of field fortifications that now became necessary. All the men that had broken ranks and deserted were prevented from entering Constantinople. They were collected and returned to duty to carry out the manual labour of creating second and third line positions between Tchataldja and the capital.

The field army had lost in its retreat the major portion of its field artillery and munitions. These losses were difficult to replace. There was, nevertheless, a means open to the Turkish War Office. It was possible to make a further demand in the matter of quick-firing field artillery upon the Asiatic Inspections. The House of Krupp, also, through the slack observation of neutrality on the part of Germany and Roumania, was able to deliver a large number of batteries which were conveyed to the Turkish armies via the Black Sea. By similar methods several thousand

serviceable horses were secured. The Turks thoroughly believed that, as the Bulgarians had failed to profit by their rapid retirement, a new complexion had been introduced into the main theatre of the campaign. As the Turkish Government was at this period endeavouring to open up negotiations with the Allies, it may be as well to bring briefly into perspective the whole picture of the campaign.

From the foregoing narrative the reader knows what has happened in Thrace. Adrianople was still holding out; Shukri Pasha, the commandant of the fortress, continued to make an active defence. The inability of the Allies to reduce this fortress, either by direct assault or by other means, continued to detain at least 100,000 of their men. Another Bulgarian force known as the Rhodope Army had operated successfully during October in the Struma and Mesta valleys. The column that invaded the Struma engaged in a neck and neck race with the Greeks for the occupation

of Salonika. This port was entered on the 9th November, the Bulgars having been beaten by a short head by the Hellenes.

The Bulgarian column in the Mesta Valley occupied Drama on October 26th and Dédèagarch on November 22nd. At the outbreak of hostilities a Turkish Division had been mobilised at Kirjali in the Rhodope mountains. This force fell back before the invaders and remained on the right bank of the Maritza. Here it was a considerable source of anxiety to the Bulgarian General Staff. It was feared that it had a rôle to play in connection with Adrianople. So anxious was General Savoff to have this Kirjali force kept in hand that he detached his independent cavalry division to follow it down the right bank of the Maritza. It was his intention that the mounted men should co-operate with the Mesta Valley force. It is for this reason, so the Bulgarians say, that they were without cavalry when the Turkish main army began its precipitate retreat. The Bulgarians

hemmed in this Kirjali corps and pressed it back upon the Maritza with such success that it ignominiously surrendered on November the 26th. About this time the Bulgarians embarked a brigade of their troops from Salonika in Greek transports and put them ashore at Dédèagarch. It is to be presumed that this movement was intended to enable them to concentrate a further force against Tchataldja.

The Servian army operating in Albania had occupied Uskub on October 26th and defeated the Turkish Western Army, consisting of the Fifth, Sixth and Seventh Corps at the battle of Kumanovo. On November 6th the Servian Army again defeated the Turkish Western Army at Perlepe. They also had another success against the residue of this Turkish Army in the neighbourhood of Monastir.

The Greeks at the beginning of November had already defeated the Turks at Yanitza and Plati Bridge. They entered Salonika on November the 8th and received the surrender of

Bulgarian infantry advancing and throwing up hasty intrenchments

Hassan Pasha and 29,000 Turkish troops. The Greek Army, however, operating in Southern Albania, had failed to reduce the defended town of Yanina. Djavid Pasha, who commanded the Sixth Turkish Army Corps, succeeded in working his way into Yanina with what was left of the Turkish Western Army that had been defeated near Monastir.

The operations of the Montenegrin Army were more or less confined to their abortive attempt to reduce Scutari. The Montenegrins at their best are only untrained soldiers and consequently unreliable material. They had begun the campaign with a great flourish of trumpets. A few heavy losses soon damped their ardour, and their want of administration and training placed them in a very poor position when they had to undertake slow and difficult approach operations in the depth of winter.

It will be seen from the foregoing outline, that Turkey had to all intents and purposes

lost the whole of her possessions in Europe excepting the point of the Thracian Peninsula that lies behind the Tchataldja lines, the tongue of Galipoli, and her three beleaguered fortresses. It has been demonstrated that the Turk as a mobile enemy is of small account, but as long as he was fed, he maintained the traditions of his race for lion hearted courage behind entrenchments. It is hardly necessary to make any mention of the naval operations. None of the Turkish ships had left the cover of the Dardanelles. The Turks had carried out some weak demonstrations against Varna and the ships were now being employed as floating batteries to supplement the defences of Tchataldja. The command of the Ægean Sea had been left entirely to the Greeks, and the latter had picked up at will such islands as they required that were not already in the occupation of the Italians.

## CHAPTER XIII

### TO A NEW COUNTRY

THE adventurers who had returned from Rodosto were not given much time in Constantinople to kick their heels. Once the Bulgarians had collected transport and replenished their supplies, they were able to move quickly enough down to where the Turkish Army had now established its line of resistance. There was nothing to impede them as Salih Pasha's independent cavalry division, with the exception of a few composite units, had been sent down to the Sweet Waters to refit.

Early on the moning of November the 13th there was very considerable movement in front of the Pera Palace Hotel. Country wagons were being loaded up with tents and camp equipment; dragomans were flitting about in service kit; the German adventurers, having

hoisted their medal ribbons, were swinging in and out of the hotel in martial gait, while the many creditors whom the dragomans had essayed to evade, were pestering the hall porter to know if such and such a gentleman was still in the hotel.

The Centurion, enjoying the luxury of hotel life after his wear-and-tear existence at the Turkish front, still remained immobile and watched with equanimity the preparations for the departure of his *confrérès*. He had already made his mental calculations as to when it would be expeditious to move for the scene of active operations. He was also anxious that the ruck of the correspondents should take themselves off. He had discovered that this herding business was detrimental to efficient service. Once he knew in which direction the mass of his colleagues had gone he proposed making his way to a totally different portion of the Lines.

The Dumpling, who never could watch movement by other correspondents without

believing that it was necessary for him to bestir himself, elected to continue his association with Jew's Harp Senior. This group hired a powerful motor car and late in the morning took the road for Kuch Chekmedji. There was an absolute exodus from the Hotel and that night the Centurion was the only adventurer left behind. His plans, however, were matured. The faithful John, moving amongst the dragomans belonging to his rivals, had ascertained the destination of the baggage of each group. This enabled the Centurion to pick out on the map a secluded village which was sufficiently far removed from the billets selected by his colleagues, and yet close enough to the actual lines to be within easy reach, without its being actually a portion of the area where the reserves would be likely to be stationed. The faithful John had the caravan all prepared and in readiness for instant movement. The Centurion alone knew what was to be its ultimate destination.

It had been the intention of the Diplomat to

join forces with the Centurion for this last phase of the fighting. The Diplomat, however, since the request had gone from the Porte to Sofia that there should be an armistice to permit of negotiations, felt that his diplomatic duties were more pressing than anything to be gained out of chance military operations. He, in common with the European opinion prevailing in Constantinople, thought that the Bulgarians had just to appear in force before the Lines, to reproduce the retreat of Lule Burgas.

As the Centurion sat over his lonely dinner, he was joined by the Popinjay, who made a journey that morning to Kuch Chekmedji in a car and had just returned. The Popinjay was the least jealous of all the adventurers. He was one of those clean-bred young Englishmen whose chief anxiety during the campaign was to be in touch with the actual fighting. He had undertaken the rôle of special correspondent because it gave him opportunities to satiate this lust for manly excitement. The

information which the Popinjay brought back from the front decided the Centurion to make his move on the following morning. Orders were, therefore, issued to John to be ready to start with the caravan early when the destination would be disclosed to him in confidence. Later in the evening the Popinjay and the Centurion decided to join forces for the particular adventure. It was thought to be prudent that unauthorised Europeans should at least be in pairs when they established themselves close up to the front.

On the following morning the Popinjay and the Centurion paddled out to the front in a second rate motor car that had been hired at an almost prohibitive price. Their ultimate objective was a little Greek village about six miles due south of Hademkuey, Nazim Pasha's headquarters. To reach this, it was proposed to take the metalled road to Kuch Chekmedji and from thence work by country roads up to the selected village. Arrived at Kuch Chekmedji they found a large posse of

their *confrérès* in possession of the village. From these they gathered that orders had been issued to commanders at the front to permit no correspondents to reach the actual scene of the operations. Several of the adventurers had been to Byuk Chekmedji, twelve miles forward, but had been politely though firmly conducted back and set upon the Constantinople road. All the adventurers who had been unsuccessful in establishing themselves on the southern extremity of the Tchataldja lines had now decided to go back to a village where there was a monastery. The Popinjay and the Centurion wished them Godspeed and said they would persevere in an endeavour to remain in the village of Byuk Chekmedji. The others assured them of the futility of this attempt and pointed out that they were only wasting their time since there was nothing to be seen except the flashes of the guns of the warships in the Bight as they bombarded theoretical Bulgarian positions somewhere in the direction of Tchataldja.

The two adventurers, however, continued on their way. When they met a suitable country road they turned off for their real objective. The country road, cut up as it was by the passage of artillery and army transport, very nearly defeated their car. Just before nightfall they reached their village. The actual situation of the village proved a triumph to the correspondent's powers of map-reading. For the immediate purposes of the adventurers its surroundings were ideal. It was just one of those little clusters of Turkish houses that are hidden away in nooks and corners of the downs all over this part of the Thracian peninsula. It had the advantage of being removed and practically hidden from the highways leading to Tchataldja. It lay in the cleft between two spurs that ran down into the valley utilised for the railway. West of the village you had but to climb a hummock and you commanded an absolute panorama of at least six roads leading up to the reverse of the southern half of the Tchataldja

positions. Yet the village was so hidden that you might well pass up and down any one of these roads a dozen times without discovering its existence.

The village itself was not of sufficient importance to support a han. The chief farmer, in a primitive way, however, fulfilled the duties of hanji. Over the gateway of his main enclosure he had a guest house which he let to such travellers as chanced his way. The adventurers had lit upon this village at an opportune moment. It was being utilised by the army as a hospital for suspect cases of cholera. The principal medical officer of the First Division and his staff of doctors were in occupation of the guest room. They had just received instructions to change their headquarters to another village nearer the Lines. As the two Englishmen arrived they had packed up their equipment and were settling with the hanji preparatory to leaving for their new destination. The Englishmen naturally moved into their apartment, which, without

exaggeration, was the only habitable room within an area of ten square miles. The Popinjay had brought his dragoman Joe with him in the car. Joe in the matter of domesticities was masterful. He immediately took charge, and, in an incredibly short time, had a meal prepared and scouts out scouring the main roads in order to direct the caravan as soon as it arrived. John and the caravan put in an appearance some time after dark.

For the purpose of description the Centurion called the village "The Larches." This was due to the fact that it was shut in by a mass of these graceful trees. The Popinjay, who was something of a wag, however, insisted that the name should be changed to Alibi-Kuey. This subsequently proved to be a very clever quip. Although the Popinjay meant an alibi in its English sense, yet it so happened that about six miles away from the spot there was a Turkish village of the name of Alibikuey.

During their stay at the front both the ad-

venturers were questioned by Turkish officers as to where they had their headquarters. All that was said was Alibikuey. It so fell out that the real Alibikuey was drawn for them by the gendarmes sent from headquarters several times while the fictitious Alibi-Kuey was never discovered as their bolt-hole.

On the following day the Centurion and the Popinjay made a long mounted reconnoissance of the southern half of the Tchataldja Lines. It may be stated here that a great deal of nonsense had been written about the state of this Line of semi-permanent fortifications. The fugitive correspondents hurrying down to Constantinople from the army in retreat, made the not uncommon mistake of confusing the village of Tchataldja and the Tchataldja mountain with the actual trace of the line of fortifications. In reality, the Tchataldja mountain and the village of Tchataldja have nothing to do with the Lines. The village itself is on the opposite side of the Karasu Valley and is at least six or seven miles west of

the most western of Turkish fortifications. Naturally enough the correspondents found no signs of fortifications at Tchataldja village. The majority of them, however, pressed on down the Constantinople road in the dark. It was quite possible to pass down this road in daylight and see very little of the real line of fortifications. These untrained observers were believed when they stated in Constantinople that Tchataldja was not even fortified and that they had seen nothing of trenches or of field works as they passed.

The Tchataldja position consists of a chain of down-crests stretching right across the Thracian Peninsula. The trace of the fortifications follows one of these almost interminable series of uplands of which mention was made in the description of the positions between Lule Burgas and Viza. In this case this continuous ridge is more definitely marked, owing to the presence of the Karasu Valley which divides the southern half of the Tchataldja Lines from the Tchataldja mountain.

This valley is marshy and difficult. It is a continuation of the Byuk Chekmedji Lake, which, with the Derkos Lake on the north, is another feature in the strength of these lines.

The entire length of the position from sea to sea is about thirty miles. Of this front, however, not more than fifteen or sixteen miles are held, since natural objects protect the remainder. The railway and the main Adrianople road cut through the lines at about their centre in the vicinity of Hademkuey. The defences of this naturally strong position consist of a chain of old redoubts which includes all the more prominent features. It may be said that this chain of works has been built up on the advice of half the fortification experts in Europe. German, English and French experts have all tried their hands at Tchataldja. The result has been artificial strengthening of a position which really never required very much to be done to it except an efficient application of the spade. The Bulgarians were kind enough to give the Turks

this latter opportunity and, for once, they were not slow to avail themselves of it. For the first time in their history, the Turkish soldiery seemed imbued with an adequate military energy.

The old redoubts designed by Bluhm Pasha, the works constructed under the advice of British officers and the three modern forts with concrete bomb-proofs which were added on the advice of Brialmont, were all linked up with double or treble tiers of infantry trenches at convenient distances between the permanent works. Positions were prepared for field batteries and field howitzers to be used as position artillery, as far as the Centurion could gather all the additional positions for field batteries that were designed after the army retreated behind the Lines. There were about one hundred and forty works in all constructed as platforms for artillery. It is true that much of the position artillery in the works was of old pattern, some even firing black powder, but it was all serviceable and there was a great

deal more artillery in position on the 15th of November than the Bulgarians had calculated upon. The southern half of the Tchataldja position is extremely strong owing to the fact that the glacis to all the works is a gentle slope leading down into the marshy valley of Karasu. The Derkos region, however, presents a foreground that is more easy of approach. The country here is less downlike; it is broken, and to a very large degree, covered with scrub. Another strength in these historic Lines is the frequency of flanking positions. There is hardly one advance work in the whole line that it would be safe to carry and hold, unless the attack were prepared to push its success immediately to the succeeding works. It is understood that the theoretical estimate of the force necessary to hold this position was put at 80,000 rifles, 250 position guns and about thirty batteries of field artillery. Although no theoretical estimate of requirements in war can be accepted as final, yet when the Bulgarian advance guards first

came into touch with the Lines, the Ottoman army had very nearly the exact numbers in position at Tchataldja to dispute the road to Constantinople as had been laid down by the theorists. In coming to this estimate, the guns of the Turkish fleet, distributed on both flanks of the position, may be reckoned as supplying an important moiety of the fortress artillery.

During their morning reconnoissance the Popinjay and the Centurion had their first real insight into the extent to which cholera was ravaging the ranks of the Turkish Army. They pushed their reconnoissance as far as Hademkuey. They did not enter this village as they did not think it expedient to present themselves at headquarters. Following a road which lies just behind the Lines, and parallel to the defences, they met the head of a sick convoy that was evidently being directed upon Hademkuey railway station. The convoy consisted of nearly a hundred springless bullock wagons. These carts were

carrying an awful freight. In each were heaped the cholera cases which had been brought during the night to the field hospitals of the amalgamated First and Second Corps. The majority seemed to be in a state of collapse. There were six to eight cases in each wagon. Where the patients were sitting up their heads were usually hanging over the sides of the carts to give them relief as each paroxysm of the disease racked their frames. From time to time the carts were turned to the roadside and a medical officer then indicated to the attendants such cases as he, from a safe distance, believed to be past medical aid. These were pulled out of the cart and dragged unceremoniously to the roadside to be collected by the burial carts which might or might not pass that way.

In his whole experience of warfare the Centurion is unable to remember a more heart-rending spectacle than this journey along that road of death. Here and there this débris of human life lay in heaps. These were gener-

In the cholera hospital camp at Mukakuey behind the Tchataldja Lines. "Actually in the village there was nothing living except the dogs." *See page 275*

ally corpses. Their cramped attitude and ghastly features bore pathetic testimony to the nature of the disease. In some places the rapidly fading quick were mingled with the dead and the Centurion will never forget, as they passed one pile, how, from a mass of corpses, a seemingly dead man raised his pallid face and with lustreless eyes fixed them with a vacant hopeless stare. The memory of that face will haunt him till his dying day.

And thus the Popinjay and the Centurion passed down into the village of Mukakuey. The epidemic seemed to have made a clean sweep of this pretty little rural hamlet. Mukakuey lay in the bottom of a valley, and, like Alibi-Kuey, was prettily shaded by groups of graceful larches. A few tattered tents showed that it had been used as a field hospital. Save for a few ghoul-like peasants, who, under the lash of a gendarme, were engaged in burying corpses on the outskirts, it was a village of the dead. Actually in the village there was nothing living except the

dogs that were quarrelling over the corpses that lay scattered amongst the tents and in the gardens. The hamlet literally smelt of the dread disease and with a shudder the two Englishmen put spurs to their horses and cantered away from these distressing scenes.

The booming of heavy guns towards the south told the adventurers that the Turkish warships lying off Byuk Chekmedji were again searching for the Bulgarian positions. The Popinjay and the Centurion rode up the downs to a rise above Karagarch, from whence they secured an admirable panorama of the whole of the southern front which the Turks were holding. On the top of this hill they found two Turkish staff officers from the Fourth Corps taking stock of the enemy's positions. Both these officers were known to the Centurion and they greeted him with unaffected surprise. They had last met in Tchorlu. On this occasion they were very useful as they had already marked down several of the Bulgarian positions. With the aid

of the Centurion's powerful glass, it was possible to see the trenches above Papas Burgas at which the Bulgarians had been working through the night. Discussing the situation generally the Turkish officers intimated that the Staff was of opinion that, if the Bulgarians intended to attack the Lines, their main efforts would be made in the direction of Derkos and Nakaskuey. These the Turks considered to be the two most vulnerable salients. These two officers spoke with enthusiasm of the new troops that were arriving from Asia Minor. It was quite evident that their optimism concerning the strength of the Lines, and the possibilities of defending them against direct attack, was sincere.

As the desultory firing from the harbour was purely an affair of "long bowls," the two Englishmen returned to their cubby-hole. The Centurion was of opinion that now pourparlers between the belligerents had been opened, there would not be any severe fighting at Tchataldja. He argued that the Allies

were in much the same case as the Japanese had been in 1904. The Japanese had attained all that was necessary to bring the Russians to terms at the battle of Mukden. Any further advance to Harbin, while demanding a far greater national effort would not produce any greater results, while it might embody risks which would jeopardise the existing ascendency. In similar case the Balkan Allies had accomplished the ends for which they had unsheathed their weapons. The position at Tchataldja was much more difficult than they had been led to believe. If they took it by a *coup-de-main,* not only would the price in life be more severe than the Bulgarians could afford, but their success would bring them immediately upon Constantinople, and into conflict with the interests of the Great Powers of Europe. Also like the Japanese, they took the risk of discounting their initial success by suffering a reverse. As the guiding heads in Sofia had hitherto shown such clever statesmanship, the Centurion believed that they

During the operations on the extreme Turkish left near the Tchataldja Lines; a Turkish battalion at midnight on November 17, with the aid of the searchlight, advancing and occupying the village of Papas Burgas, on the heels of the Bulgarians, who evacuated it precipitately before them

would be content, and would prefer to settle on the merits of their present successes, rather than push the issues of war into unfathomable depths.

Sharing this view the Popinjay determined to ride back to Constantinople to put in order some arrangements that were troubling him at the base. That night, therefore, the Centurion was alone at Alibi-Kuey. Just before he turned in, he received a visit from Colonel Atim Bey, the principal medical officer who had been in charge of the village when the adventurers had arrived. The kindly officer, who was an Armenian and one of the leading operating surgeons in Constantinople, informed the Centurion that it was proposed to turn Alibi-Kuey into a cholera camp for the First Division. He had returned to arrange all the details and he gave the Centurion the information more or less as a warning of what was to be expected. He was somewhat surprised when the Centurion showed no concern at the information. In fact he was inclined

to welcome it. He realised that once the village was established as a real cholera camp there would be less chance of staff officers and gendarmes searching it as a likely hiding-place for unauthorised foreigners at the front.

The Turkish army and navy in action near the Tchataldja Lines

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE RUN OF THE SEASON

DURING the two days at Alibi-Kuey there had been intermittent firing confined almost entirely to the insistence of the Turkish war vessels lying off Byuk Chekmedji. In the early morning of the day after the Popinjay had left, the Centurion woke from his sleep in a start and sat up on his camp bed with every nerve tense. His experienced ear told him that something big had suddenly developed. The welkin rang with the reverberation of heavy artillery fire. This was no desultory practice on the part of the Turkish warships. It was the rhythmic and systematic bursting of shells fired in salvos. The Centurion listened for the space of two minutes. There could be no doubt about it. Calling for John, he jumped out of bed and began to dress. John, who did not wake

easily, was aroused. In co-operation with Joe the necessary dish of cocoa was prepared and in twenty minutes the Centurion was on his pony and galloping over the veldt to the sound of the guns.

It was a still winter's morning. A heavy haze hung over all the depressions in the downs. The light was bad and as the Centurion galloped in the direction of Hademkuey he could not understand why the Bulgarians had chosen this particular morning to make their first serious demonstration against the Lines. Secretly he was a little annoyed with them since, from the sound of firing, it seemed that they had upset all his calculations. There was no doubt about the intensity of the artillery fire. At the first estimate it looked as if the intention was to drive an attack home and the morning had been selected for this purpose, owing to the visual cover that the winter's mists would give to advancing infantry.

About half way between Alibi-Kuey and

Hademkuey, there is a ridge that commands an excellent panorama of the southern half of the Karasu Valley. This was the Centurion's first objective. As he reached this ridge he found that it was already occupied by a large number of Turkish officers and men from the reserve units stationed in the village of Omarli. The artillery fire had now become general as the Turks were able to find without effort the whole of the Bulgarian batteries in action against them. The ease with which these targets became unmasked was due to the dullness of the morning. Tchataldja Mountain and the downs that rise away to the west of the Karasu Valley were just black ridges in the half light. Against this background every flash from the Bulgarian batteries was visible. The target was so clear that it was a simple matter to count the flashes and thus determine the strength of the batteries in action.

As far as the Centurion could judge the Bulgarian artillery fire was mainly concentrated upon the twin Hamidieh forts. These

works are outworks to the centre of the main line of Turkish defences. But while concentrating much of their fire upon these two permanent works, the Bulgarian gunners had batteries to spare for the more important targets behind them. The big works of Ahmed Pasha and Bahceis Tabja sparkled in the dim morning light with canopies of bursting shrapnel, while heavier projectiles from time to time threw up great dark patches of smoke and mud as they gouged their way along their crests.

The Turkish reserves were bivouacked in the valleys or on the reverse slopes of the positions. They were now all moving up into cover in selected depressions behind the Lines. The trenches in which the infantry holding these positions were disposed, are all dug on the approach slopes of the positions. Many of them are low down and there is no regularity in the alignment. As all the loose earth has been distributed and the parapets turfed with sods, it is difficult to pick them out at any

distance from the grassy slopes in which they are traced.

As the Centurion stood watching the inferno of shell-bursts the sound of musketry and machine-gun fire broke out all along the left of the position. This could mean only one thing. Somewhere infantry was advancing. His present position was no place from which to see the infantry attack. The Centurion, therefore, remounted his pony and trotted down into the Mukakuey Valley, where he and the Popinjay had seen the hospital convoy on the preceding day. Leaving that village of death on the left, he cantered down the valley in the direction of the saddle through which the railway passes over the position. West of the village he found the Tchataldja road which here again meets the railway. There was very little on the road. He passed one or two ammunition carts being urged up to the front, four wagons loaded with bread making for the Lines, and he met two or three groups of men conducting or

carrying a wounded comrade to the rear. As he trotted along he was overtaken by a young Turkish officer. The latter, surprised at the suddenness of the attack, was cantering out from Hademkuey to join his unit. The Centurion and the Turkish officer at once fraternised and it was lucky for the former that they did so, as, a little further on, they met an examining post which the officer said had had orders to fire on all civilians who came up the road unaccompanied by a soldier in uniform.

As soon as they were round the corner behind which the examining post was placed, it was necessary to go fast as they had reached the zone of the enemy's fire. Shells were bursting all along so as to search the footslopes of Bahceis Tabja. The under features here sink gently into the Karasu Valley. This Nek is the one low gateway in the whole of the Tchataldja position. In it the Turks have erected a chain of earthworks. Portions of this chain are of more or less permanent construction and are provided with splinter proofs

and magazines. At intervals along this line there are redoubts in which were emplaced large calibre Krupps and several batteries of quick firing field artillery. The intermediate trenches were occupied by infantry and machine-gun sections.

As the Centurion and his new-found friend cantered up to the nearest work some friendly soldiers in a splinter proof shouted to them to bring their horses under cover. It was well they did so. The animals were scarcely below the beams of the splinter proof when a salvo of shrapnel burst overhead and the strike swept up the dust and stones along the path they had just crossed. An officer in the splinter proof told the Centurion's companion that his company was in one of the old works on the left front of this particular splinter proof. He here proposed to wish the Centurion good-bye and showed much surprise when the latter volunteered to accompany him to his command. The semi-permanent work was only about two hundred yards away. It

was not even necessary to run to reach it. There happened at that period to be one of those curious lulls which recur periodically during an artillery fight.

On reaching the work the Centurion found everybody there very comfortably installed. The garrison had not been much troubled by the enemy's shrapnel as the enemy had confined most of their energy to the artillery works further along the line. The work covered a grand field of fire. Its approaches sloped very gently down to the Karasu stream. The bed of the stream is masked with a certain amount of scrub-growth before the valley slopes up again towards the village of Papas Burgas and the Tchataldja Mountain. The officer commanding the company holding this work knew his business. All his men were sitting down in the trenches well under cover waiting until the sentries observing the front should discover a target. Up to the time of the arrival of the Centurion the company had suffered no casualty even though one or two

"A salvo of shrapnel burst overhead" *See page 287*

common shell had topped the parapet and smothered everyone with dirt and dust. The severe outburst of musketry-fire that had attracted the Centurion had broken out further to the left on the front of the First Corps.

A few minutes after the Centurion's arrival an officer who was watching the river bed reported infantry to be in the scrub. According to the captain of the company this infantry must have come down in the night or made its way from some other point within the shelving bed. Since daylight nothing had crossed down the upward slope from Papas Burgas. The captain went up to reconnoitre and the Centurion, who had very powerful glasses, went up with him. After a little time it was easy to make out the flat caps of the Bulgarians in the river bed. The men were immediately ordered to man the parapet. The target was then pointed out to them. The Centurion was surprised at the workmanlike manner in which this captain went about his business. He was not one of the educated young men

from Constantinople but was one of the old type of Turkish officer. He had probably risen from the ranks. He evinced as he exercised command in the field every instinct of a careful and even scientific soldier.

The river bed was about 1500 metres from the work. The soldiers only received instructions to watch the target. They had not long to wait. Presently half a dozen groups of Bulgarian infantry popped up out of the scrub. They walked upright and gallantly into the open. Now was the time for the Turks. The captain ordered the section commanders to open fire. There was no concealment of the movement of the Bulgarian infantry. A withering Mauser fire crashed out along the entire Turkish front. At the same time the Turkish field gunners picked up the target. The advancing infantry disappeared as if they had been swept away by magic. The men had dropped in their tracks. The fire was too heavy for them to face. This, however, did not deter further groups from moving out to

support their comrades. These in their turn were received with the same crash of rifles. They too disappeared. Presently the prostrate men rose and rushed forward. This time they ran in their efforts to gain ground. It seemed that the Turkish gunners had found their range accurately. With the aid of glasses it was possible to see the strike of the shrapnel amongst the prostrate infantrymen.

This continued for about an hour. In this period, as far as the Centurion could calculate, about a battalion of Bulgarian infantrymen had come out over the lip of the river bed. The Bulgarians had not been able to advance more than three or four hundred yards. As an infantry attack, as far as the Centurion could diagnose it, it was the most futile and wasteful thing he had ever seen in his life. The senior officer who ordered it could have made no reconnoissance of the position he proposed to attack, or, if he had, then he must have had a contempt for the Turkish resistance that was totally unjustified.

Towards midday the senior Bulgarian officer evidently came to much the same conclusion, as the infantry began to retire to the cover of the river bed. They were whipped in their retirement by shrapnel and rifle fire, and as could be seen with the glasses, there were many forms left lying in the vacated positions. As long as the Centurion remained in the trenches there was no further infantry movement that he could discern along that front. After nightfall, however, he understands, a rifle battalion from the Second Turkish Corps went down and cleaned the Bulgarians out of the river bed.

All this time there was no intermission in the fearful hurly-burly of the cannon combat all along the lines. The Turkish fleet had joined in the noisy revelry and its great projectiles could be seen bursting among the Bulgarian trenches along the foot of the Tchataldja Mountain. The Centurion felt that it was time to betake himself to another part of the field. When he retired to the splinter

proof to find his pony it was necessary to run as there was a horrid noise of shrapnel in the air. The supports in the splinter proof were delighted to see him back. The Turkish Tommy really is a lovable, simple fellow. Like all Mohammedans, when you are upon his right side, he is a perfect gentleman. The Centurion offered the men who had held his horse a few piastres. They refused the proffered gift with dignity, saying, "We are all bound for Heaven. What would we do with piastres in Heaven!"

The officer commanding these supports sent a sergeant with the Centurion to get him past the examining post, and, after mutual greetings, the Centurion moved to another portion of the field. This time he made for the slopes of Ahmed Pasha as it seemed to him that there was a continuous roll of musketry fire from the trenches there and in front of the Hamidieh works. As he passed down the reverse of Bahceis Tabja he came upon a field-dressing station. A slightly wounded artillery officer

with whom he opened a conversation said that most of the shrapnel wounds were slight and pointed out with considerable satisfaction that the Bulgarian gunners were bursting their shrapnel far too high for it to be effective. He added that very many of the men had been hit by shrapnel bullets that were spent.

It was evident that everything was going well for the Turks along this portion of the front. No demand, whatever, had been made upon the reserves who were bunched up on the reverse slopes as near the crest as was safe without exposing them to the high angle-fire with which the Bulgarians, from time to time, essayed to search the reverse of the positions. Having with the permission of their officer left his pony with some friendly soldiers of the reserve, the Centurion found a place on the crest of Ahmed Pasha from which he secured a bird's-eye view of the Karasu Valley, as it rose up to the Hamidieh forts. A very heavy shell fire was concentrated on these two forts. With his glasses he could see that an

infantry movement had taken place from the village of Ezetin and made its way down towards the river. There was nothing very definite or persistent in this attempt and it recoiled automatically under the sustained rifle fire which met it from the Turkish trenches.

A stout little Turkish officer, who, at this spot, shared the cover with the Centurion was radiant as he said gleefully: "We have got these swineherds to-day."

From time to time the Bulgarian gunners, whose batteries on this front were on the ridges behind Ezetin, turned their attention upon Ahmed Pasha. The wounded artillery officer's diagnosis had been right. It was quite evident that the majority of the Bulgarian batteries which were engaging Ahmed Pasha were ranging at quite 6,000 yards. The bursting of shrapnel high at this range is not a very profitable method of making an impression upon a prepared position. The howitzers, and there seemed to be one or two batteries of these weapons, made better prac-

tice, and while the Centurion was at Ahmed Pasha, one of these large projectiles did a cruel burst amongst a section of Turkish supports sheltering behind a wall.

The Hamidieh forts were within more effective range of the Bulgarian fire. The Turks there had considerable casualties and as the Centurion lay on Ahmed Pasha he could see the wounded being helped down the reverse slopes of the works to a dressing station in the valley, and from time to time two or three stretchers told their tale of shells that had got home.

Shortly after midday there was a decided lull in the firing. For a time the Bulgarian fire completely died away. The Turks too seemed in need of rest. The Centurion seized this opportunity to get away from his hiding-place at Ahmed Pasha. He was beginning to think of the duty he owed to his employers in London and felt that it was time to get back to Alibi-Kuey in order that a messenger should be despatched. Of one thing he was certain.

This was, that wisely or unwisely, the Bulgarians had made an attack upon Tchataldja and that the Turks had easily kept this attack at arm's length. What worried the Centurion was the difficulty to find a reason for this more or less futile effort.

Was it that the army, believing that the civilians at Sofia might be tempted to wrest from them their crowning victory, had taken the bit between their teeth? Was it that the politicians thought that the sound of the Bulgarian guns bombarding within thirty miles of the Turkish capital would have a moral effect in the coming negotiations? Was it that the Bulgarian General Staff, believing all the reports of disorganisation in the Turkish retreat, thought they had but to show their teeth to frighten the Turkish soldiers from their trenches? Was it a mismanaged reconnoissance intended merely to test the strength of the Turkish positions, or was it a serious effort to force the Lines of Tchataldja?

Even now the Centurion will not permit

himself to make a definitive answer to any of these queries. Considered as a reconnoissance in force it was cumbersome and expensive. As a real attack, it was ill-conceived, ill-conducted and altogether futile. As a diplomatic *ballon d'essai* it was a fatuous blunder. It led the Turks to believe that they had at last won a great victory. It caused them to harden their hearts sevenfold, and it re-established the influence of the military party in the capital.

The Centurion hastened back to Alibi-Kuey. Arrived there he hurriedly wrote his message and despatched it to his agents in Constantinople so that no time should be lost in its reaching its destination.

After a scratch meal the Centurion mounted a fresh horse and started again to the front. He could not fail to regret that the Popinjay had been so unfortunate in the selection of a day to return to Constantinople. There was still a heavy cannonade but the ear of the Centurion noted that the fury had already de-

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Cholera patients arriving by bullock-cart at Constantinople

parted out of the day's battling. This time he headed towards Karagarch, the headquarters of Omar Taver's composite army corps.

There is a slight table-land at Karagarch from the summit of which a grand panorama of the whole of the scene of operations is possible. The Centurion had some difficulty in reaching this plateau. The examining posts showed every inclination to detain him. An officer of Nishanjis, however, recognised him and invited him to join a group of his comrades who were standing on the edge of the plateau.

It must be admitted that in this period of the campaign the officers of the army were not kindly disposed towards the foreign adventurers. Nor was this surprising. In the first place the Turkish Army had little in the record of the campaign upon which to congratulate itself; nevertheless, the case against the army in Thrace had been overstated by the majority of the foreign adventurers who had shared its hospitality. There is no criticism

that is quite so painful as the truth. There was just sufficient truth in the criticisms that had been meted out so handsomely with regard to the retirement from Lule Burgas to make them the bitterest reading to those responsible for the bearing of the army.

There is, however, little in the Turkish character that is malignant, and although the officers of this rifle battalion at first received the Centurion coolly, under the influence of his congratulations on the day's fighting, they soon became the jolly hospitable fellows that all true Turks are *au fond*. There was a general spirit of elation in the discovery that they really had sufficient resistance to face their enemy. This may be a pathetic criticism upon them. Nevertheless it is a terrible thing for the officers of an army to have to take part in a hurried retreat. It destroys that confidence which is the chief factor complementary to experience and training.

The Centurion stayed with the rifle officers until it began to get dark. All rifle fire had

died out early in the afternoon. The Turkish gunners, nevertheless, maintained a continuous bombardment of the Bulgarian battery positions. The Turks with their position artillery and the guns of the fleet had a superior range to anything that the Bulgarians had brought into action. Early in the day they had secured admirable targets. Throughout the afternoon the reply of the Bulgarian gunners was only desultory. At intervals they treated the Hamidieh works to a few minutes of sustained and concentrated fire. These efforts were spasmodic. When night fell suddenly, as it does in the winter in Thrace, the firing immediately died out. A period was put to it with an abruptness that was truly remarkable. It almost seemed as if it had been turned off by the movement of a lever.

When the Centurion returned to Alibi-Kuey he found that the Popinjay had just arrived. The latter was desperately chagrined at having missed the battle. The sound of the firing had been perfectly audible

in Pera. As soon as the Popinjay heard it he had tumbled out of bed and taken to horse. By midday he had reached a position near Hademkuey from which he had been able to witness some of the effects of the bombardment, but he had been unable to gather any detail.

An engagement such as this Bulgarian effort against a position of the strength of Tchataldja affords but little opportunity for those intimate details which alone bring personal interest into a description of fighting. The only really close fighting had occurred in the north, in the vicinity of Derkos. Here a very bloody affair was perpetrated. Probably it was the bloodiest of the whole campaign. This was the capture and recapture of Kizildzali Tepe, one of the advance works on the northern section of the Tchataldja position. It was held by a battalion of Kurdish infantry newly arrived from Asia.

It will be remembered that the morning had broken overcast and misty. In the lowland

about Derkos this mist hung in heavy opaque clouds. The approaches to the Kizildzali Tepe work lie over broken country. The field of observation is much curtailed by scrub and incipient forest. The Bulgarians had selected this point as a salient. Under cover of night a force of about a battalion had been detached to steal up to this Turkish advanced position and, if possible, to rush it in the small hours of the morning. A large infantry force was concentrated in the scrub and forest. Presumably it was proposed, if this detached force was successful in the enterprise, to use Kizildzali Tepe as a stepping-stone from which to rush the Lines. The forlorn hope made a complete success. They penetrated right up to the rear of the work without disturbing a single sentry. What followed was a short and bloody butchery. In the bitter cold of that misty morning the entire Turkish garrison was silently bayoneted.

The Bulgarians had scored a big initial success. The opaqueness of the mist, however,

was to be their undoing. In the first place it delayed them in communicating the success to the main attacking force. But what was more desperate it allowed the colonel and adjutant of the Turkish Reserves lying in the rear of the neighbouring works to ride up to Kizildzali Tepe. The colonel had suspected that something was wrong. Under cover of the mist he rode up to the work and found the Bulgarians in occupation. He and his adjutant turned their horses round and galloped back to their own men. This colonel was a quick-witted fellow. He roused his own battalion, and in fifteen minutes his men were doubling through the mist to re-establish the Turkish line. They took the Bulgarians in the rear much in the same manner in which they themselves had taken the original garrison. Their methods of dealing with the Bulgarians were also the same. A Turkish officer who saw the work after the double tragedy said that it was the bloodiest shambles that any war had seen. The colonel of the reserves

wasted no time in rejoicing over his victory. Realising that the Bulgarian effort was but the prelude to an attack in force he disposed his battalion in readiness. His men were just able to man the parapet in time when the Bulgarian main attack began to separate itself from the mists. The Bulgarians, having now received information that the work was theirs, were advancing with the utmost confidence. The reception they received so paralysed them that the infantry made no further aggression on this front throughout the day.

## CHAPTER XV

### BACK HOME

ALTHOUGH there was desultory artillery firing and a certain amount of contact between the outposts for three days after the unmasking of the Bulgarian positions before Tchataldja the limits of the Bulgarian offensive had been decided on the merits of the engagement described in the preceding chapter. The Popinjay and the Centurion made reconnoissances to various points of the Lines and watched a considerable amount of artillery practice. They could not find any evidences of a serious endeavour on the part of the enemy to persevere in a forward campaign. The Turks, greatly elated over the affair, talked grandiloquently of making a reconnoissance in force preparatory to taking a definite offensive destined to drive the Allies out of Thrace. This of course was all vapour.

The Turkish rearward services were sufficiently employed in maintaining the army at Tchataldja; they were not equal to any forward movement even if the Allies could have been brought to acquiesce.

Two days after the engagement Nazim Pasha sent out a parlementaire officer and opened direct communications with the commander-in-chief of the invading armies. Knowing that once Oriental and semi-Oriental races begin to negotiate there must intervene a long period of bazaar haggling, and feeling the strain of being cooped up in a cholera camp, the Popinjay and the Centurion decided to leave their country residence and return to the capital.

With their return to Constantinople the story of the latter-day adventurers comes to an end. The negotiations which were opened at Tchataldja developed, as all the world knows, into an armistice and a general meeting of delegates from the belligerents in London, to arrange a basis for a permanent peace in the

Balkans. It is not within the province of the Centurion, or within the scope of this slight narrative of the adventures of correspondents associated with the Turkish Army in Thrace, to enter upon any discussion on the subject of the meeting of these delegates in London.

There is, however, the matter of the representation of newspapers at the front with modern armies. This subject is deserving of attention. The Centurion does not approach this delicate question in the spirit of proffering advice to the General Staffs of foreign armies. On the other hand there is much in the conduct of the Balkan war that should interest our own General Staff. Ever since the Russo-Japanese war the question of permitting newspaper correspondents to accompany the British army in the field has been under consideration. Many propositions have been discussed. One section of thought considered the time was opportune definitely to kill the service of news by independent channel. The proposal was that the General Staff

The dining-car armistice agreement near the Tchataldja Lines: The late Nazim Pasha, Turkish Minister of War and Commander-in-Chief of the Turkish Army, and General Savoff, the Bulgarian leader, shaking hands after the decision to suspend hostilities

itself should be responsible for such news that the General in command considered it advisable to have published. The Bulgarian General Staff has forever destroyed the promise of this expedient being acceptable to the British nation. They have definitely shown that a General Staff taking upon itself the service of news for publication can never be a trustworthy agent. It is not suggested that any British general in the field would permit the deliberate and grandiloquent falsehoods that were published in Vienna at the instance of the Bulgarian General Staff; but their methods have demonstrated the perfectly legitimate desire of a general in the field to utilise his press communications to deceive both his enemy and his neighbours. In the eyes of the public the value of General Staff messages will always be taken at a heavy discount.

The Bulgarian methods, therefore, having wrecked the proposal that an official news service should be instituted as an alternative to the rigid exclusion of all newspaper corres-

pondents from an army in the field, it behoves the military authorities to devise a compromise. The Centurion would be the first to admit, that, if the British public is content to support the General Staff in the exclusion of newspaper correspondents, this is the right course to pursue. Unfortunately neither governments, nor generals in the field, have the power to coerce public opinion in this country either into a spirit of unselfish patriotism or into a suppression of the interest the nation takes in the operations of its armies in the field.

The Committee of National Defence vainly hope that by an Order in Council they will be able to improvise legislation that will silence the entire press of the Empire. This is the example set by the Japanese. Even in that highly disciplined nation the papers rose in revolt against the measure. The leading journals found that it paid them to publish the news in spite of the penalty. In this country nothing short of an absolute suppression of the journal that breaks the law of the censor-

ship would, in the event of any important war news, have the desired result. Such an extreme penalty is out of the question. As it has always been in the past the circulation of newspapers has been made or maintained by the adequacy of the information supplied during periods of excitement. It will be the same in the future. Every newspaper editor knows this, and he will not be frightened, any more than the Japanese editors were frightened, by a moderate press law.

On the other hand, it is perfectly obvious that no well-organised army in the field will be able to permit the uncontrolled free-lancing that was the feature of the adventurers' operations in Thrace. This is not a small problem, and it is one that should now be engaging the attention of the General Staff. The necessity that certain information be suppressed during the period of military activity that precedes a war, and after the navies and the armies have engaged in hosilities with the enemy, is of such

vital importance, that it behoves the General Staff to create in peace a department that should devote itself entirely to the study of press control.

It is probable that the Centurion will never again take the field in the guise of an adventurer. He has observed, nevertheless, that there is growing up in the modern journalistic atmosphere a corps of keen, clever, dashing young men who have every intention in all future wars to render adequate service to their papers, preferably with, or, if necessary, without, the permission of the General Staff. When it becomes a question of the wits of these men and the wealth of their papers being pitted against any clumsy and hurriedly improvised methods of repression, there is no doubt as to whom will come the ultimate success.

It seems to the Centurion a national calamity that these young men are all shaping their ideas in a school that believes success will depend upon the measures employed to defeat

the Censorship, rather than that they can best serve employers and the nation by a loyal and sympathetic co-operation with the military authorities. If there existed at the War Office a formulated procedure and a department that devoted its every energy to the working out of this problem, it is probable that the younger school of war correspondents would grow up with an entirely different view of the character of their duties than possesses them at present.

In approaching this subject it must be remembered that the so-called teaching of the Japanese action in Manchuria is not really applicable to Europe. The Japanese had the advantage of conducting their campaign in an area over which they could exercise control over all the neutral means of communication. The entire ignorance of all Europeans of their caligraphy was a further factor in the partial secrecy they were able to maintain. These advantages will not be found in Europe and it seems to the Centurion that the General

Staff has not sufficiently realised this fact.

Modern conditions in international communications and in the service of newspaper information have rendered obsolete all past theories on the subject of press representation with armies in the field.

The new school of correspondents will take the field in the next war, be they authorised or unauthorised, with the single maxim before them: "This thing can be done. I will do it or go under in the attempt."

It is for the General Staff to decide now whether the correspondent shall take the field as a loyal and instructed associate of the army, or as an organiser of an independent secret service.

It only remains to the Centurion to take leave of his companions in the field of adventure. It has been necessary, for reasons which need not be laboured, to cloak under the thin veil of anonymity the identity of each. The Centurion can only say that in all his experience he has never been associated with a

more delightful coterie of companions than the corps of latter-day adventurers with whom he took the field in Thrace. There was never during the whole period a discord amongst them. Every day produced, especially amongst the Englishmen, those little evidences of loyalty and friendship which are the very salt of man's existence. The deadly rivalry embodied in their work never for a moment entered into their daily intercourse. There were, on the other hand, countless instances when in adversity the hand of friendship was ungrudgingly extended in circumstances where it might legitimately have been denied. As long as he lives the Centurion will carry with him the memory of the last evening in Constantinople when nearly all the English adventurers who appear in his narrative met together in a final happy union before the dispersion of the corps.

THE END

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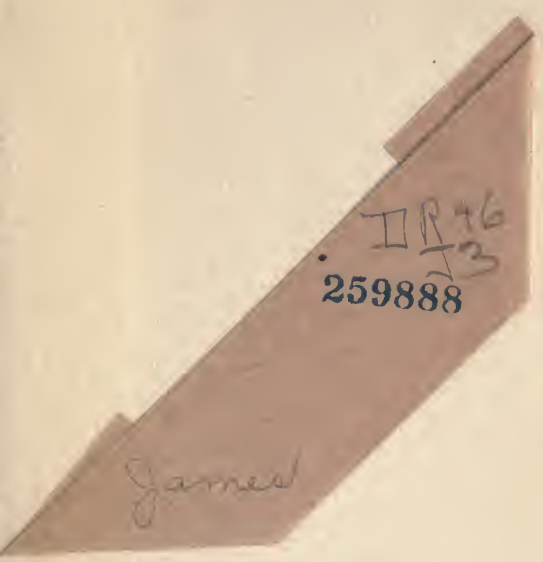
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